THE DWELLERS IN FIVE SISTERS COURT

H. E. SCUDDER.

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THE DWELLERS IN FIVE-SISTERS COURT.

BY

H. E. SCUDDER.

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DWELLERS IN FIVE-SISTERS COURT.

CHAPTER I.

For a business street Amory Lane certainly is very lazy. It sets out just to make a short passage between two thoroughfares, but, though forced at first to walk straight by the warehouses that wall in its entrance, it soon begins to loiter, staring down back alleys, yawning into courts, plunging into stable-yards, and at length standing irresolute at three ways of getting to the end of its journey. It passes by artisans' shops, and keeps two or three masons' cellars and carpenters' lofts, as if its slovenly buildings needed perpetual repair. It has not at all the air of once knowing better days. It began life hopelessly ; and though the mayor and common council and board of aldermen, with ten righteous men, should daily march through it, the broom of official and private virtue could not sweep it clean of its slovenliness. But one of its idle turnings does end in a virtuous court ; here Amory Lane may come, when it indulges in vain aspirations for a more respectable character, and take refuge in the quiet demeanor of Amory Court. The court is shaped like the letter T with an L to it. The upright beam connects it with Amory Lane, and maintains a non-committal character,

since its sides are blank walls; upon one side of the cross-beam are four houses, while a fifth occupies the diminutive L of the court, ensconcing itself in a snug corner, as if ready to rush out at the cry of "All in! all in!" Gardens fill the unoccupied sides, toy-gardens, but large enough to raise all the flowers needed for this toy-court. The five houses built exactly alike, are two and a half stories high, and have each a dormer-window, curtained with white dimity, so that they look like five elderly dames in caps; and the court has gotten the name of Five-Sisters Court, to the despair of Amory Lane, which felt its sole chance for respectability slip away when the court came to disown its patronymic.

It was at dusk, the afternoon before Christmas, when a young man, Nicholas Judge by name, walking inquiringly down Amory Lane, turned into Five-Sisters Court, and stood facing the five old ladies, apparently in some doubt as to which he should accost. There was a number on each door, but no name; and it was impossible to tell from the outside who or what sort of people lived in each. If one could only get round to the rear of the court, one might get some light, for the backs of houses are generally off their guard, and the Five Sisters who look alike in their dimity caps might possibly have more distinct characters when not dressed for company. Perhaps, after the caps are off, and the spectacles removed — but toward what outrageous sentiments are we drifting!

There was a cause for Nicholas Judge's hesitation. In one of those houses, he had good reason to believe, lived an aunt of his, the only relation left to him in the world, so far as he knew, and by so slender a thread was he held to her that he knew only her maiden name. Through the labyrinth of possible widowhoods,

one of which at least was actual, and the changes in condition which many years would effect, he was to feel his way to the Fair Rosamond by this thread. Nicholas was a wise young man, as will no doubt appear when we come to know him better, and, though a fresh country youth, visiting the city for the first time, was not so indiscreet as to ask bluntly at each door, until he got satisfaction, "Does my Aunt Eunice live here?" As the doors in the court were all shut and equally dumb, he resolved to take the houses in order, and proposing to himself the strategy of asking for a glass of water, and so opening the way for further parley, he stood before the door of Number One.

He raised the knocker (for there was no bell), and tapped in a hesitating manner, as if he would take it all back in case of an egregious mistake. There was a shuffle in the entry; the door opened slowly, disclosing an old and tidy negro woman, who invited Nicholas in by a gesture, and saying, "You wish to see master?" led him on through a dark passage without waiting for an answer. "Certainly," he thought, "I want to see the master more than I want a glass of water: I will keep that device for the next house;" and, obeying the lead of the servant, he went up-stairs, and was ushered into a room, where there was just enough dusky light to disclose tiers of books, a table covered with papers, and other indications of a student's abode.

Nicholas's eye had hardly become accustomed to the dim light, when the scholar himself, the master whom he was to see, came forward from the window; a small, old man, erect, with white hair and smooth forehead, beneath which projected two beads of eyes, that seemed, from their advanced position, endeavoring to take in what lay round the corner of the head as well as objects directly in front. His long palm-leaved study-gown and

tasseled velvet cap lent him a reverend appearance; and he bore in his hand what seemed a curiously shaped dipper, as if he were some wise man coming to slake a disciple's thirst with water from the fountain-head of knowledge.

"Has he guessed my pretended errand?" wondered Nicholas to himself, feeling a little ashamed of his innocent ruse, for he was not in the least thirsty; but the old man began at once to address him, after motioning him to a seat. He spoke abruptly, and with a restrained impatience of manner: —

"So you received my letter appointing this hour for an interview. Well, what do you expect me to do for you? You compliment me, in a loose sort of way, on my contributions to philological science, and tell me that you are engaged in the same inquiries with myself" —

"Sir," said Nicholas, in alarm, — "I ought to explain myself, — I" —

But the old gentleman gave no heed to the interruption, and continued: —

— "And that you have published an article on the Value of Words. You sent me the paper, but I did n't find anything in it. I have no great opinion of the efforts of young men in this direction. It contained commonplace generalities which I never heard questioned. You can't show the value of words by wasting them. I told you I should be plain. Now you want me to give you some hints, you say, as to the best method of pursuing philological researches. In a hasty moment I said you might come, though I don't usually allow visitors. You praise me for what I have accomplished in philology. Young man, that is because I have not given myself up to idle gadding and gossiping. Do you think, if I had been making calls, and receiv-

ing anybody who chose to force himself upon me, during the last forty years, that I should have been able to master the digamma, which you think my worthiest labor?"

"Sir," interrupted Nicholas again, thinking that the question, though it admitted no answer, might give him a chance to stand on his own legs once more, "I really must ask your pardon."

"The best method of pursuing philological researches!" continued the old scholar, deaf to Nicholas's remonstrance. "That is one of your foolish general questions, that show how little you know what you are about. But do as I have done. Work by yourself, and dig, dig. Give up your senseless gabbling in the magazines, get over your astonishment at finding that *cælum* and *heaven* contain the same idea etymologically, and that there was a large-bread bakery at Skōlos, and make up your mind to believe nothing till you can't help it. You have n't begun to work yet. Wait till you have lived as I have, forty years in one house, with your library likely to turn you out of doors, and only an old black woman to speak to, before you begin to think of calling yourself a scholar. Eh?"

At this point the old gentleman adjusted the tin dipper, which was merely an ear-trumpet, — though for a moment more mysterious to Nicholas, in its new capacity, than when he had regarded it as a unique specimen of a familiar household-implement, — and thrust the bowl toward the embarrassed youth. In fact, having said all that he intended to say to his unwelcome supposed disciple, he showed enough churlish grace to permit him to make such reply or defense as was at his command.

The old gentleman had pulled up so suddenly in his harangue, and called for an answer so authoritatively,

and with such a singular flourish of his trumpet, that Nicholas, losing command of the studied explanation of his conduct, which a moment before had been at his tongue's end, caught at the last sentence spoken, and gained a perilous advantage by asking, —

"Have you, indeed, lived in this house forty years, sir?"

"Eh! what?" said the old gentleman, impatiently, perceiving that he had spoken. "Here, speak into my trumpet. What is the use of a trumpet, if you don't speak into it?"

"Oh," thought Nicholas to himself, "I see, he is excessively deaf;" and bending over the trumpet, where he saw a sieve-like frame, as if all speech were to be strained as it entered, he collected his force, and repeated the question, with measured and sonorous utterance, "Sir, have you lived in this house forty years?"

"I just told you so," said the old man, not unnaturally starting back. "And if you were going to ask me such an unnecessary question at all," he added, testily, "you need n't have roared it out at me. I could have heard that without my trumpet. Yes, I've lived here forty years, and so has black Maria, who opened the door for you; and I say again that I have accomplished what I have by uninterrupted study. I have n't gone about bowing to every he, she, and it. I never knew who lived in any of the other houses in the court till to-day, when a woman came and asked me to go out for the evening to her house; and just because it was Christmas eve, I was foolish enough to be wheedled by her into saying I would go. Miss —— Miss ——, I can't remember her name now. I shall have to ask Maria. There you have n't got much satisfaction out of me; but do you mind what I said to you, and it will be

worth more than if I had told you what books to read. Eh?" and he invited Nicholas once more to drop his words into the trumpet.

"Good afternoon," said Nicholas, hesitatingly, — "thank you," — at a loss what pertinent reply to make, and in despair of clearing himself from the tangle in which he had become involved. It was plain, too, that he should get no satisfaction here, at least upon the search in which he was engaged. But the reply seemed quite satisfactory to the old gentleman, who cheerfully relinquished him to black Maria, who, in turn, passed him out of the house.

Left to himself, and rid of his personal embarrassment, he began to feel uncomfortably guilty, as he considered the confusion which he had entailed upon the real philological disciple, and would fain comfort himself with the hope that he had acted as a sort of lightning-rod to conduct the old scholar's bolts, and so had secured some immunity for the one at whom the bolts were really shot. But his own situation demanded his attention; and leaving the to-be unhappy young man and the to-be perplexed old gentleman to settle the difficulty over the mediating ear-trumpet, he addressed himself again to his task, and proposed to take another survey of the court, with the vague hope that his aunt might show herself with such unmistakable signs of relationship as to bring his researches to an immediate and triumphant close.

Just as he was turning away from the front of Number One, buttoning his overcoat with an air of self-abstraction, he was suddenly and unaccountably attacked in the chest with such violence as almost to throw him off his feet. At the next moment his ears were assailed by a profusion of apologetic explanations from a young man, who made out to tell him, that, coming out

of his house with the intention of calling next door, he had leaped over the snow that lay between, and, not seeing the gentleman, had, most unintentionally, plunged headlong into him. He hoped he had not hurt him; he begged a thousand pardons; it was very careless in him; and then, perfect peace having succeeded this violent attack, the new-comer politely asked, —

"Can you tell me whether Doctor Chocker is at home, and disengaged? I see that you have just left his house."

"Do you mean the deaf old gentleman in Number One?" asked Nicholas.

"I was not aware that he was deaf," said his companion.

"And I did not know that his name was Doctor Chocker," said Nicholas, smiling. "But may I ask," said he, with a sudden thought, and blushing so hard that even the wintry red of his cheeks was outshone, "if you were just going to see him?"

"I had an appointment to see him at this hour; and that is the reason why I asked you if he was disengaged."

"He — he is not engaged, I believe," said Nicholas, stammering and blushing harder than ever; "but a word with you, sir. I must — really — it was wholly unintentional — but unless I am mistaken, the old gentleman thought I was you."

"Thought you were I?" said the other, screwing his eyebrows into a question, and letting his nose stand for an exclamation-point. "But come, it is cold here, — will you do me the honor to come up to my room? At any rate, I should like to hear something about the old fellow." And he turned towards the next house.

"What!" said Nicholas, "do you live in Number Two?"

"Yes, I have rooms here," said his companion, jumping back over the snow. "You seem surprised."

"It is extraordinary," muttered Nicholas to himself, as he entered the house and followed his new acquaintance up-stairs.

Their entrance seemed to create some confusion; for there was an indistinct sound as of a tumultuous retreat in every direction, a scuttling up and down-stairs, and a whisking of dresses round corners, with still more indistinct and distant sound of suppressed chattering and a voice berating.

"It is extremely provoking," said the young man, when they had entered his room and the door was shut; "but the people in this house seem to do nothing but watch my movements. You heard that banging about? Well, I seldom come in or go out, especially with a friend, but that just such a stampede takes place in the passage-ways and staircase. I have no idea who lives in the house, except a Mrs. Crimp, a very worthy woman, no doubt, but with too many children, I should guess. I only lodge here; and as I send my money down every month with the bill which I find on my table, I never see Mrs. Crimp. Now I don't see why they should be so curious about me. I 'm sure I am very contented in my ignorance of the whole household. It 's a little annoying, though, when I bring any one into the house. Will you excuse me a moment, while I ring for more coal?"

While he disappeared for this purpose, seeming to keep the bell in some other part of the house, Nicholas took a hasty glance round the room, and, opening a book on the table, read on the fly-leaf, *Paul Le Clear*, a name which he tagged for convenience to the occupant of the room until he should find one more authentic. The room corresponded to that in which he

had met Doctor Chocker, but the cheerful gleam of an open fire gave a brighter aspect to the interior. Here also were books; but while at the Doctor's the walls, tables, and even floor seemed bursting with the crowd that had found lodging there, so that he had made his way to a chair by a sort of foot-path through a field of folios, here there was the nicest order and an evident attempt at artistic arrangement. Nor were books alone the possessors of the walls; for a few pictures and busts had places, and two or three ingenious cupboards excited curiosity. The room, in short, showed plainly the presence of a cultivated mind; and Nicholas, who, though unfamiliar with city-life, had received a capital intellectual training at the hands of a scholarly, but anchoret father, was delighted at the signs of culture in his new acquaintance.

Mr. Le Clear reëntered the room, followed presently by the coal-scuttle in the hands of a small servant, and, remembering the occasion which had brought them together, invited Nicholas to finish the explanation which he had begun below. He, set at ease by the agreeable surroundings, opened his heart wide, and, for the sake of explicitness in his narration, proposed to begin back at the very beginning.

"By all means begin at the beginning," said Mr. Le Clear, rubbing his hands in expectant pleasure; "but before you begin, my good sir, let me suggest that we take a cup of tea together. I must take mine early to-night, as I am to spend the evening out, and there 's something to tell you, sir, when you are through," — as if meeting his burst of confidence with a corresponding one, — "though it 's a small matter, probably, compared with yours, but it has amused me. I can't make a great show on the table," he added, with an elegant humility, when Nicholas accepted his invitation; "but

I like to take my tea in my room, though I go out for dinner."

So saying, he brought from the cupboard a little table-cloth, and, bustling about, deposited on a tea-tray, one by one, various members of a tea-set, which had evidently been plucked from a tea-plant in China, since the forms and figures were all suggested by the flowery kingdom. The lids of the vessels were shaped like tea-leaves; and miniature China men and women picked their way about among the letters of the Chinese alphabet, as if they were playing at word puzzles. Nicholas admired the service to its owner's content, establishing thus a new bond of sympathy between them; and both were soon seated near the table, sipping the tea with demure little spoons, that approached the meagreness of Chinese chop-sticks, and decorating white bread with brown marmalade.

"Now," said the host, "since you share my salt, I ought to be introduced to you, an office which I will perform without ceremony. My name is Paul Le Clear," which Nicholas and we had already guessed correctly.

"And mine," said Nicholas, is "Nicholas, — Nicholas Judge."

"Very well, Mr. Judge; now let us have the story," said Paul, extending himself in an easy attitude; "and begin at the beginning."

"The story begins with my birth," said Nicholas, as if about to give infinite detail. But it was a short story after all, for, not even naming the place of his birth, he told his companion that after his mother's death, in his childhood he had lived in a country home at the foot of a mountain, with his father for almost solitary friend and teacher, until, his father dying, he had come to the city; that he had but just

reached the place, and he made it his first object to find his mother's only sister, with whom, indeed, his father had kept up no acquaintance, and for finding whom he had but a slight clew, even if she were then living. Nicholas brought his narrative down to the point where Paul had so unexpectedly accosted him, stopping there, since subsequent facts were fully known to both.

"And now," he concluded kindling a little with his subject, "I am in search of my aunt. What sort of woman she will prove to be I cannot tell; but if there is any virtue in sisterly blood, surely my Aunt Eunice cannot be without some of that noble nature which belonged to my mother, as I have heard her described, and as her miniature bids me believe in. How many times of late, in my solitariness, have I pictured to myself this one kinswoman receiving me for her sister's sake, and willing to befriend me for my own! True, I am strong, and able, I think, to make my way in the world unaided. It is not such help as would ease my necessary struggle that I ask, but the sympathy which only blood-relationship can bring. So I build great hopes on my success in the search; and it would be a very happy fortune which should bring us together this evening. Do you know of any one, Mr. Le Clear, living in this court, who might prove to be my aunt?"

"Upon my soul," said that gentleman, who had been sucking the juice of Nicholas's narrative, and had now reached the skin, "you have come to the last person likely to be able to tell you. It was only to-day that I learned by a correspondence with Doctor Chocker, whom all the world knows, that he was living just next door to me. Who lives on the other side I can't tell. Mrs. Crimp lives here; but she receipts her bills, Temperance A. Crimp; so there 's no chance for a Eunice

there. As for the other three houses, I know nothing, except just this; and here I come to my story, which is very short, and nothing like so entertaining as yours. Yesterday I was called upon by a jiggoty little woman, — I say jiggoty, because that expresses exactly my meaning, — a jiggoty little woman, who announced herself as Miss Pix, living in Number Five, and who brought an invitation in person to me to come to a small party at her house this Christmas eve; and as she was jiggoty, I thought I would amuse myself by going. But she is *Miss* Pix; and your aunt, according to your showing, should be *Mrs.*"

"That must be where the old gentleman, Doctor Chocker, is going," said Nicholas, who had forgotten to mention that part of the Doctor's remarks, and now repeated what had been said to him.

"Really, that is entertaining!" cried Paul. "I certainly shall go, if it 's for nothing else than to see Miss Pix and Doctor Chocker together."

"Pardon my ignorance, Mr. Le Clear," said Nicholas, with a smile; "but what do you mean by jiggoty?"

"I mean," said Paul, "to express a certain effervescence of manner, as if one were corked against one's will, ending in a sudden pop of the cork and a general overflowing. I invented the word after seeing Miss Pix. She is an odd person; but I should n't wish to be so concerned about my neighbors as she appears to be. My philosophy of life," he continued, standing now before the fire, and receiving its entire radiation upon the superficies of his back, "is to extract sunshine from cucumbers. Think of living forty years, like Doctor Chocker, on the husks of the digamma! I am obliged to him for his advice, but I shan't follow it. Here are my books and prints; out of doors are people and Nature: I propose to extract sunshine from all these cu-

cumbers. The world was made for us, and not we for the world. When I go to Miss Pix's this evening,— and, by the way, it 's 'most time to go, — I presume I shall find one or two ripe cucumbers. Christmas, too, is a capital season for this chemical experiment. I find people are more off their guard, and offer special advantages for a curious observer and experimenter. Here is my room; you see how I live; and when I have no visitor at tea, I wind up my little musical box. You have no idea what a pretty picture I make, sitting in my chair, the tea-table by me, the fire in the grate, and the musical box for a cricket on the hearth;" and Mr. Le Clear laughed good-humoredly.

Nicholas laughed, too. He had been smiling throughout the young philosopher's discourse; but he was conscious of a little feeling of uneasiness, as if he were being subjected to the cucumber-extract process. He rose to go, and shook hands with Paul, who wished him all success in finding his aunt; as for himself, he thought he got along better without aunts. The two went downstairs to the door, causing very much the same dispersion of the tribes as before; and Nicholas once more stood in Five-Sisters Court, while Paul Le Clear returned to his charming bower, to be tickled with the recollection of the adventure, and to prepare for Miss Pix's party.

"On the whole, I think I won't disturb Doctor Chocker's mind by clearing it up," said he to himself. "It might, too, bring on a repetition of the fulmination against my paper which the young Judge seemed so to enjoy relating. An innocent youth, certainly! I wonder if he expected me to give him my autobiography."

Nicholas Judge confessed to himself a slight degree of despondency, as he looked at the remaining two houses in the court, since Miss Pix's would have to be counted

out, and reflected that his chances of success were dwindling. His recent conversation had left upon his mind, for some reason which he hardly stopped now to explain, a disagreeable impression; and he felt a trifle wearied of this very dubious enterprise. What likelihood was there, if his aunt had lived here a long time past, as he assumed in his calculations, that she would have failed to make herself known in some way to Doctor Chocker? since the vision which he had of this worthy lady was that of a kind-hearted and most neighborly soul. But he reflected that city life must differ greatly from that in the country, even more than he had conceded with all his *a priori* reasonings; and he decided to draw no hasty inferences, but to proceed in the Baconian method by calling at Number Three. He was rather out of conceit with his strategy of thirst, which had so fallen below the actual modes of effecting an entrance, and now resolved to march boldly up with the irresistible engine of straight-forward inquiry, — as straight-forward, at least, as the circumstance would permit. He knocked at the door. After a little delay, enlivened for him by the interchange of voices within the house, apparently at opposite extremities, a light approached, and the door was opened, disclosing a large, florid-faced man, in his shirt-sleeves, holding a small and sleepy lamp in his hand. Nicholas moved at once upon the enemy's works.

"Will you have the goodness to tell me, sir, if a lady named Miss Eunice Brown lives here?" — that being his aunt's maiden name, and possibly good on demand thirty years after date. The reply came, after a moment's deliberation, as if the man wished to gain time for an excursion into some unexplored region of the house, —

"Well, sir, I won't say positively that she does n't;

and yet I can say, that in one sense of the word, Miss Eunice Brown does not live here. Will you walk in, and we will talk further about it."

Nicholas entered, though somewhat wondering how they were to settle Miss Brown's residence there by the most protracted conversation. The man in shirt-sleeves showed him into a sitting-room, and setting the lamp upon the top of a corner what-not, where it twinkled like a distant star, he gave Nicholas a seat, and took one opposite to him, first shutting the door behind them.

"Will you give me your name, sir?" said he.

Nicholas hesitated, not quite liking to part with it to one who might misuse it.

"I have no objection," said his companion, in a sonorous voice, "to giving my name to any one that asks it. My name is Soprian Manlius."

"And mine," said Nicholas, not to be outdone in generosity, "is Nicholas Judge."

"Very well, Mr. Judge. Now we understand each other, I think. I asked your name as a guaranty of good faith. Anonymous contributions cannot be received, et cetera, — as they say at the head of newspapers. And that's my rule of business, sir. People come to me to ask the character of a girl, and I ask their names. If they don't want to give them, I say, 'Very well; I can't intrust the girl's character to people without name.' And it brings them out, sir, it brings them out," said Mr. Manlius, leaning back, and taking a distant view of his masterly diplomacy.

"Do people come to you to inquire after persons' characters?" asked Nicholas, somewhat surprised at happening upon such an oracle.

"Well, in a general way, no," said Mr. Manlius, smiling; "though I won't say but that they would suc-

ceed as well here as in most places. In a particular way, yes. I keep an intelligence-office. Here is my card, sir," — pulling one out of his waistcoat-pocket, and presenting it to Nicholas; "and you will see by the phraseology employed, that I have unrivaled means for securing the most valuable help from all parts of the world. Mr. Judge," he whispered, leaning forward, and holding up his forefinger to enforce strict secrecy, "I keep a paid agent in Nova Scotia." And once more Mr. Manlius retreated in his chair, to get the whole effect of the announcement upon his visitor.

The internal economy of an office for obtaining and furnishing intelligence might have been further revealed to Nicholas; but at this moment a voice was heard at the outside of the door, calling, "S'prian! S'prian! we're 'most ready."

"Coming, Caroline," replied Mr. Manlius, and, recalled to the object for which his visitor was there, he turned to Nicholas, and resumed, —

"Well, Mr. Judge, about Miss Eunice Brown, whether she lives here or not. Are you personally acquainted with Miss Brown?"

"No, sir," said Nicholas, frankly. "I will tell you plainly my predicament. Miss Eunice Brown was my mother's sister; but after my mother's death, which took place when I was a child, there was no intercourse with her on the part of our family, which consisted of my father and myself. My father, I ought to say, had no unfriendliness toward her, but his habits of life were those of a solitary student; and therefore he took no pains to keep up the acquaintance. He heard of her marriage, and the subsequent death of her husband; rumor reached him of a second marriage, but he never heard the name of the man she married in either case. My father lately died; but before his

death he advised me to seek this aunt, if possible, since she was my only living near relation; and he told me that he had heard of her living in this court many years ago. So I have come here with a faint hope of tracing her."

Mr. Manlius listened attentively to this explanation; and then solemnly walking to the door, he called in a deep voice, as if he would have the summons start from the very bottom of the house for thoroughness, — "Caroline!"

The call was answered immediately by the appearance of Mrs. Manlius, in a red dress, that put everything else in the room in the background.

"Caroline," said he, more impressively than would seem necessary, and pointing to Nicholas, "this is Mr. Nicholas Judge. Mr. Judge, you see my wife."

"But, my dear," said Mrs. Manlius, nervously, as soon as she had bowed, discovering the feeble lamp, which was saving its light by burning very dimly, "that lamp will be off the what-not in a moment. How could you put it right on the edge?" And she took it down from its pinnacle, and placed it firmly in the middle of a table, at a distance from anything inflammable. "Mr. Manlius is so absent-minded, sir," said she, turning to Nicholas.

"Caroline," said her husband, "this will be a memorable day in the history of our family. Eunice has found a dear sister's son."

"Where?" she asked, turning for explanation to Nicholas, who at Mr. Manlius's words felt his heart beat quicker.

Then Mr. Manlius, in as few words as his dignity and the occasion would deem suitable, stated the case to his wife, who looked admiringly upon Mr. Manlius's oratory, and interestingly upon Nicholas.

"Shall I call Eunice down, S'prian?" said she, when her husband concluded, and conveying some mysterious information to him by means of private signals.

"We have here," said Mr. Manlius, now turning the hose of his eloquence toward Nicholas, and playing upon him, "we have here a dear friend, who has abode in our house for many years. She came to us when she was in trouble, and here has she found a resting-place for the soles of her feet. Sir," with a darksome glance, "her relations had forgotten her."

"I must say" — interrupted Nicholas; but Mr. Manlius waved him back, and continued: —

"But she found true kinsfolk in the friends of her early days. We have cared for her tenderly, and now at last we have our reward in consigning her to the willing hands of a young scion of her house. She was Eunice Brown; she had a sister who married a Judge, as I have often heard her say; and she herself married Mr. Archibald Starkey, who is now no more. Caroline, I will call Eunice;" and Mr. Manlius went heavily out of the room.

Nicholas was very much agitated, and Mrs. Manlius very much excited, over this sudden turn of affairs.

"Eunice has lived with us fifteen years, come February; and she has been one of the family, coming in and going out like the rest of us. I found her on the door-step one night, and was n't going to bring her in at first, because, you see, I did n't know what she might be; when, lo and behold! she looked up, and said I, 'Eunice Brown!' 'Yes,' said she, and said she was cold and hungry; and I brought her in, and told Mr. Manlius, and he came and talked with her, and said he, 'Caroline, there is character in that woman;' for, Mr. Judge, Mr. Manlius can read character in a person wonderfully; he has a real gift that way; and, indeed, he

needs it in his profession ; and, as I tell him, he was born an intelligence officer."

Thus, and with more in the same strain, did Mrs. Manlius give vent to her feelings, though hardly in the ear of Nicholas, who paced the room in restless expectation of his aunt's approach. He heard enough to give a turn to his thoughts ; and it was with unaffected sorrow that he reflected how the lonely woman had been dependent upon the charity, as it seemed, of others. He saw in her now no longer merely the motherly aunt who was to welcome him, but one whom he should care for, and take under his protection. He heard steps in the entry, and easily detected the ponderous tread of Mr. Manlius, who now opened the door, and reappeared in more careful toilet, since he was furbished and smoothed by the addition of proper touches, until he had quite the air of a man of society. He entered the room with great pomp and ceremony all by himself, and met Nicholas's disappointed look by saying, slowly,

"Mrs. Starkey, your beloved aunt, will appear presently ;" and throwing a look about the room, as if he would call the attention of all the people in the dress-circle, boxes, and amphitheatre, he continued, "I have intimated to your aunt the nature of your relationship, and I need not say that she is quite agitated at the prospective meeting. She is a woman" —

But Mr. Manlius's flow was suddenly turned off by the appearance of Mrs. Starkey herself. The introduction, too, which, as manager of this little scene, he had rehearsed to himself, was rendered unnecessary by the prompt action of Nicholas, who hastened forward, with tumultuous feelings, to greet his aunt. His honest nature had no skeptical reserve ; and he saluted her affectionately, before the light of the feeble lamp, which seemed to have husbanded all its strength for

this critical moment, could disclose to him anything of the personal appearance of his relative. At this moment the twinkling light, like a star at dawn, went out; and Mrs. Manlius, rushing off, reappeared with an astral, which turned the somewhat gloomy aspect of affairs into cheerful light. Perhaps it was symbolic of a sunrise upon the world which inclosed Nicholas and his aunt. Nicholas looked at Mrs. Starkey, who was indeed flurried, and saw a pinched and meagre woman, the flower of whose youth had long ago been pressed in the book of ill-fortune until it was colorless and scentless. She found words presently, even before Nicholas did; and sitting down with him in the encouraging presence of the Manlii, she uttered her thoughts in an incoherent way: —

"Dear, dear! who would have said it? When Miss Pix came to invite us all to her party, and said, 'Mrs. Starkey, I 'm sure I hope you will come,' I thought it might be too much for such a quiet body as I be. But that was nothing to this. Why, if here I have n't got a real nephew; and, to be sure, it 's a great while since I saw your mother, but, I declare, you do look just like her, and a Judge's son you are, too. Did they say you looked like your father, Nicky? I was asking Caroline if she thought my bombazine would do, after all; and now I do think I ought to wear my India silk, and put on my pearl necklace, for I don't want my Nicky to be ashamed of me. You 'll go with us, won't you, nephew, to Miss Pix's? I expect it 's going to be a grand party; and I 'll go round and introduce you to all the great people; and how did you leave your father, Nicholas?"

"Why, aunt, did not Mr. Manlius tell you that he was dead?" said Nicholas.

"Her memory 's a little short," whispered Mrs. Man-

lius; but, hardly interrupted by this little answer and whisper, Mrs. Starkey was again plunging headlong into a current of words, and struggling among the eddies of various subjects. Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Manlius, having, as managers, set the little piece on the stage in good condition, were carrying on a private undertoned conversation, which resulted in Mrs. Manlius asking, in an engaging manner, —

"Eunice, dear, would you prefer to stay at home this evening with your nephew? Because we will excuse you to Miss Pix, who would hardly expect you."

Mrs. Starkey was in the midst of a voluble description of some private jewelry which she intended to show the astonished Nicholas; but she caught the last words, and veered round to Mrs. Manlius, saying, —

"Indeed, she expects me; and she expects Nicholas, too. She will be very much gratified to see him, and I have no doubt she will give another party for him; and if she does, I mean to invite my friend the alderman to go. I should n't wonder if he was to be there to-night; and now I think of it, it must be time to be going. Caroline, have you got your things on?"

Mrs. Starkey spoke with a determination that suffered no opposition, so that Nicholas and Mr. Manlius were left alone for a moment, while the two women should wrap themselves up.

"Your aunt is unduly excited, Mr. Judge," said the intelligence-officer; "and it was for that reason that I advised she should not go. She has hardly been herself the last day or two. Our neighbor, Miss Pix — a woman whose character is somewhat unsettled; no fixed principles, sir, I fear," shaking his head regretfully; "too erratic, controlled by impulse, possessing an inquisitive temperament," telling off upon a separate finger each count in the charges against Miss Pix's

character, and reserving for the thumb the final overwhelming accusation, — "Sir, she has not learned the great French economical principle of Lassy Fair." Miss Pix being thus stricken down, he helped her up again with an apology. "But her advantages have no doubt been few. She has not studied political economy; and how can she hope to walk unerringly?" — and Mr. Manlius gazed at an imaginary Miss Pix wandering without compass or guide over the desert of life. "She makes a party to-night. And why? Because it is Christmas eve. That is a small foundation, Mr. Judge, on which to erect the structure of social intercourse. Society, sir, should be founded on principles, not accidents. Because my house is accidentally contiguous to two others, shall I consider myself, and shall Mrs. Manlius consider herself, as necessarily bound by the ligaments of Nature — by the ligaments of Nature, Mr. Judge — to the dwellers in those houses? No, sir. I don't know who lives in this court beside Miss Pix. Nature brought your aunt and Mrs. Manlius together, and Nature brought you and your aunt together. We will go, however, to Miss Pix's. It will gratify her. But your aunt is excited about the, for her, unusual occasion. And now she has seen you. I feared this interview might overcome her. She is frail; but she is fair, sir, if I may say so. She has character; very few have as much, — and I have seen many women. Did you ever happen to see Martha Jewmer, Mr. Judge?"

Nicholas could not remember that he had.

"Well, sir, that woman has been in my office twelve times. I got a place for her each time. And why? Because she had character"; and Mr. Manlius leaned back to get a full view of character. Before he had satisfied himself enough to continue his reminiscences,

his wife and Mrs. Starkey returned, bundled up as if they were going on a long sleigh-ride.

"We're ready, S'prian," said Mrs. Manlius. "Eunice thinks she will go still," — which was evident from the manner in which Mrs. Starkey had gathered about her a quantity of ill-assorted wrappers, out of the folds of which she delivered herself to each and all in a rapid and disjointed manner; and the party proceeded out of the house, Mrs. Manlius first shutting and opening various doors, according to some intricate system of ventilation and heating.

CHAPTER II.

Nicholas gave his arm to his aunt, and, though anxious to speak of many things, could hardly slip a word into the crevices of her conversation; nor then did his questions or answers bring much satisfactory response. He was confused with various thoughts, unable to explain the random talk of his companion, and yet getting such glimpses of the dreary life she had led as made him resolve to give her a home that should admit more sunshine into her daily experience.

They were not kept waiting long at Miss Pix's door, for a ruddy German girl opened it at their summons; and, once inside, Miss Pix herself came forward with beaming face to give them a Christmas eve greeting. Mr. Manlius had intended making the official announcement of the arrival of the new nephew, but was no match for the ready Mrs. Starkey, who at once seized upon their hostess, and shook her warmly by the hand, pouring out a confused and not over-accurate account of her good fortune, mixing in various details of her personal affairs. Miss Pix, however, made out the main fact, and turned to Nicholas, welcoming him with both hands, and in the same breath congratulating Mrs. Starkey, showing such honest, whole-souled delight that Nicholas for a moment let loose in his mind a half-wish that Miss Pix had proved to be his aunt, so much more nearly did she approach his ideal. The whole party stood basking for a moment in Miss Pix's Christ-

mas greeting, then extricated themselves from their wrappers with the help of their bustling hostess, and were ushered into her little parlor, where they proved to be the first arrivals. It was almost like sitting down in an arbor; for walls and ceiling were quite put out of sight by the evergreen dressing; the candlesticks and picture-frames seemed to have budded; and even the poker had laid aside its constitutional stiffness, and unbent itself in a miraculous spiral of creeping vine. Mr. Manlius looked about him with the air of a connoisseur, and complimented Miss Pix.

"A very pretty room, Miss Pix, — a very pretty room! Quite emblematical!" And he cocked his head at some new point.

"Oh, I can't have my Christmas without greens!" said Miss Pix. "Christmas and greens, you know, is the best dish in the world. Isn't it, Mrs. Starkey?"

But Mrs. Starkey had no need of a question; for she had already started on her career as a member of the party, and was galloping over a boundless field of observation.

There was just then another ring; and Miss Pix started for the door, in her eagerness to greet her visitors, but recollected in season the tribute which she must pay to the by-laws of society, and hovered about the parlor door till Gretchen could negotiate between the two parties. Gretchen's pleased exclamation in her native tongue at once indicated the nature of the arrival; and Miss Pix, whispering loudly to Mrs. Manlius, "My musical friends," again rushed forward, and received her friends almost noisily; for when they went stamping about the entry to shake off the snow from their feet against the inhospitable world outside, she also, in the excess of her sympathetic delight, caught herself stamping her little foot. There was a

hurly-burly, and then they all entered the parlor in a procession, preceded by Miss Pix, who announced them severally to her guests as Mr. Pfeiffer, Mr. Pfeffendorf, Mr. Schmauker, and Mr. Windgraff. Everybody bowed at once, and rose to the surface, hopelessly ignorant of the name and condition of all the rest, except his or her immediate friends. The four musical gentlemen especially entirely lost their names in the confusion; and as they looked very much alike, it was hazardous to address them, except upon general and public grounds.

Mrs. Starkey was the most bewildered, and also the most bent upon setting herself right, — a task which promised to occupy the entire evening. "Which is the fifer?" she asked Nicholas; but he could not tell her, and she appealed in vain to the others. Perhaps it was as well, since it served as an unfailing resource with her through the evening. When nothing else occupied her attention, she would fix her eyes upon one of the four, and walk around till she found someone disengaged enough to label him, if possible; and as the gentlemen had much in common, while Mrs. Starkey's memory was confused, there was always room for more light.

Miss Pix meanwhile had disentangled Nicholas from Mrs. Starkey, and, as one newly arrived in the court, was recounting to him the origin of her party.

"You see, Mr. Judge, I have only lived here a few weeks. I had to leave my old house; and I took a great liking to this little court, and especially to this little house in it. 'What a delightful little snuggery!' thought I. 'Here one can be right by the main streets, and yet be quiet all day and evening.' And that 's what I want; because, you see, I have scholars to come and take music-lessons of me. 'And then,' I thought to

myself, 'I can have four neighbors right in the same yard, you may say.' Well, here I came; but — do you believe it? — hardly anybody even looked out of the window when the furniture-carts came up, and I could n't tell who lived in any house. Why, I was here three weeks, and nobody came to see me. I might have been sick, and nobody would have known it." Here little Miss Pix shook her head ruefully at the vision of herself sick and alone. "I 've seen what that is," she added, with a mysterious look. "'Well, now,' I said to myself, 'I can't live like this. It is n't Christian. I don't believe but the people in the court could get along with me, if they knew me.' Well, they did n't come, and they did n't come; so I got tired, and one day I went round and saw them all, — no, I did n't see the old gentleman in Number One that time. Will you believe it? not a soul knew anybody else in any house but their own! I was amazed, and I said to myself, 'Betsey Pix, you 've got a mission;' and, Mr. Judge, I went on that mission. I made up my mind to ask all the people in the court, who could possibly come, to have a Christmas eve gathering in my house. I got them all, except the Crimps, in Number Two, who would not, do what I could. Then I asked four of my friends to come and bring their instruments; for there 's nothing like music to melt people together. But, oh, Mr. Judge, not one house knows that another house in the court is to be here; and, oh, Mr. Judge, I've got such a secret!" And here Miss Pix's cork flew to the ceiling, in the manner hinted at by Mr. Paul Le Clear; while Nicholas felt himself to have known Miss Pix from birth, and to be, in a special manner, her prime-minister on this evening.

It was not long before there was another ring, and Mr. Le Clear appeared, who received the jiggoty Miss

Pix's welcome in a smiling and well-bred manner, and suffered himself to be introduced to the various persons present, when all seized the new opportunity to discover the names of the musical gentlemen, and fasten them to the right owners. Paul laughed when he saw Nicholas, and spoke to him as an old acquaintance. Miss Pix was suddenly in great alarm, and, beckoning away Nicholas, whispered, "Don't for the world tell him where the others live." Like the prime-minister with a state-secret, Nicholas went back to Paul, and spent the next few minutes in the trying task of answering leading questions with misleading answers.

"I see," said the acute Mr. Le Clear to himself; "the aunt is that marplotty dame who has turned our young Judge into a prisoner at the bar;" and he entered into conversation with Mrs. Starkey with great alacrity, finding her a very ripe cucumber. Mr. Manlius, who was talking, in easy words of two syllables, to the musical gentlemen, overheard some of Mrs. Starkey's revelations to Mr. Le Clear, and, watching his opportunity, got Paul into a corner, where he favored him with some confidences respecting the lady.

"You may have thought, sir," said he, in a whisper, "that Mrs. Starkey is — is," — and he filled out the sentence with an expressive gesture toward his own well-balanced head.

"Not at all," said Paul, politely.

"She is periodically affected," continued Mr. Manlius, "with what I may perhaps call excessive and ill-balanced volubility. Mrs. Starkey, sir, is a quiet person, rarely speaking; but once in five or six weeks, — the periods do not return with exact regularity, — she is subject to some hidden influence, which looses her tongue, as it were. I think she is under the influence now, and her words are not likely to — to correspond

exactly with existing facts. You will not be surprised, then, at her words. They are only words, words. At other times she is a woman of action. She has a wonderful character, sir."

"Quite a phenomenon, indeed, I should say," said Paul, ready to return to so interesting a person, but politely suffering Mr. Manlius to flow on, which he did uninterruptedly.

Doctor Chocker was the last to come. Miss Pix knew his infirmity, and contented herself with mute, but expressive signs, until the old gentleman could adjust his trumpet and receive her hearty congratulations. He jerked out a response, which Miss Pix received with as much delight as if he had flowed freely, like Mr. Manlius, who was now playing upon Mr. Le Clear an analysis of Nicholas's character, which he had read with unerring accuracy, as Mrs. Manlius testified by her continued, unreserved agreement. Indeed, the finding of his aunt by Nicholas in so unexpected a manner was the grand topic of the evening; and the four musical gentlemen, hearing the story in turn from each of the others, were now engaged in a sort of diatessaron, in which the four accounts were made to harmonize with considerable difficulty: Mr. Schmauker insisting upon his view, that Nicholas had arrived wet and hungry, was found on the doorstep, and dragged in by Mrs. Starkey; while Mr. Pfeffendorf and Mr. Pfeiffer substituted Mrs. Manlius for Mrs. Starkey; and Mr. Windgraff proposed an entirely new reading.

Dr. Chocker's entrance created a lull; and the introduction, performed in a general way by the hostess, brought little information to the rest, who were hoping to revise their list of names, — and very little to the Doctor, who looked about inquisitively, as Miss Pix dropped the company in a heap into his ear-trumpet.

His eye lighted on Nicholas, and he went forward to meet him, to the astonishment of the company, who looked upon Nicholas as belonging exclusively to them. A new theory was at once broached by Mr. Windgraff to his companions, that Dr. Chocker had brought about the recognition; but it lost credit as the Doctor began to question Nicholas, in an abrupt way, upon his presence there.

"Did n't know I should meet you again, young man," said he. "But you don't take my advice, eh? or you would n't have been here. But I 'm setting you a pretty example! This is n't the way to study the value of words, eh Mr. — Mr. — Le Clear?"

The real Mr. Le Clear and his fiction looked at each other, and by a rapid interchange of glances signified their inability to extricate themselves from the snarl, except by a dangerous cut, which Nicholas had not the courage at the moment to give. The rest of the company were mystified; and Mr. Manlius, pocketing the character which he had just been giving, free of charge, to his new acquaintance, turned to his wife, and whispered awfully, "An impostor, Caroline!" Mrs. Manlius looked anxiously and frightened back to him; but he again whispered, "Wait for further developments, Caroline!" and she sank into a state of terrified curiosity. Fortunately, Mrs. Starkey was at the moment confiding much that was irrelevant to Mr. Le Clear the actual, who did not call her attention to the words. The four musical gentlemen were divided upon the accuracy of their hearing.

Miss Pix, who had been bustling about, unconscious of the mystery, now created a diversion by saying, somewhat flurried by the silence that followed her first words, —

"Our musical friends have brought a pleasant little surprise for us; but, Mr. Pfeiffer, won't you explain the Children's Symphony to the performers?"

Everybody at once made a note of Mr. Pfeiffer, and put a private mark on him for future reference; while he good-humoredly, and with embarrassing English, explained that Miss Pix had proposed that the company should produce Haydn's Children's Symphony, in which the principal parts were sustained by four stringed instruments, which he and his friends would play; while children's toy-instruments, which the other three were now busily taking out of a box, would be distributed among the rest of the company; and Miss Pix would act as leader, designating to each his or her part, and time of playing.

The proposal created considerable confusion in the company, especially when the penny-trumpet, drum, cuckoo, night-owl, quail, rattle, and whistle were exhibited, and gleefully tried by the four musical friends. Mr. Manlius eyed the penny-trumpet which was offered him with a doubtful air, but concluded to sacrifice his dignity for the good of the company. Mrs. Manlius received her cuckoo nervously, as if it would break forth in spite of her, and looked askance at Nicholas to see if he would dare to take the night-owl into his perjured hands. He did take it with great good-humor, and, at Miss Pix's request, undertook to persuade Doctor Chocker to blow the whistle. He had first to give a digest of Mr. Pfeiffer's speech into the ear-trumpet, and, it is feared, would have failed to bring the Doctor round without Miss Pix, who came up at the critical moment, and told him that she knew he must have known how when he was a boy, accompanied with such persuasive frolicking that the Doctor at once signified his consent and his proficiency by blowing a blast into

Nicholas's ear, whom he regarded as a special enemy on good terms with him, to the great merriment of all.

The signal was given, and the company looked at Miss Pix, awaiting their turn with anxious solicitude. The symphony passed off quite well, though Mr. Le Clear, who managed the drum, was the only one who kept perfect time. Mrs. Starkey, who held the rattle aloft, sprung it at the first sound of the music, and continued to spring it in spite of the expostulations and laughter of the others. Mrs. Manlius, unable to follow Miss Pix's excited gestures, turned to her husband, and uttered the cuckoo's doleful note whenever he blew his trumpet, which he did deliberately at regular intervals. The effect, however, was admirable; and as the entire company was in the orchestra, the mutual satisfaction was perfect, and the piece was encored vociferously, to the delight of little Miss Pix, who enjoyed without limit the melting of her company, which was now going on rapidly. It continued even when the music had stopped, and Gretchen, very red, but intensely interested, brought in some coffee and cakes, which she distributed under Miss Pix's direction. Nicholas shared the good lady's pleasure, and addressed himself to his aunt with increased attention, taking good care to avoid Doctor Chocker, who submitted more graciously than would be supposed to a steady play from Mr. Manlius's hose. Mr. Pfeiffer and his three musical friends made themselves merry with Mrs. Manlius and Miss Pix, while Mr. Le Clear walked about performing chemical experiments upon the whole company.

And now Miss Pix, who had been all the while glowing more and more with sunshine in her face, again addressed the company, and said: —

"I think the best thing should be kept till toward

the end; and I've got a scheme that I want you all to help me in. We're all neighbors here," — and she looked round upon the company with a smile that grew broader, while they all looked surprised, and began to smile back in ignorant sympathy, except Doctor Chocker, who did not hear a word, and refused to smile till he knew what it was for. "Yes, we are all neighbors. Doctor Chocker lives in Number One; Mr. Le Clear lives in Number Two; Mr. and Mrs. Manlius, Mrs. Starkey, and Mr. Judge are from Number Three; my musical friends live within easy call; and I live in Number Five."

Here she looked round again triumphantly, and found them all properly astonished, and apparently very contented, except Doctor Chocker, who was immovable. Nicholas expressed the most marked surprise, as became so hypocritical a prime-minister, causing Mr. Manlius to make a private note of some unrevealed perjury.

"Now," said Miss Pix, pausing, and arresting the profound attention of all, "now, who lives in Number Four?"

If she expected an answer, it was plainly not locked up in the breast of any one before her. But she did not expect an answer; she was determined to give that herself, and she continued: —

"There is a most excellent woman there, Mrs. Blake, whom I should have liked very much to introduce to you to-night, especially as it is her birthday. Is n't she fortunate to have been born on Christmas eve? Well, I did n't ask her, because she is not able to leave her room. There she has sat, or lain, for fifteen years! She 's a confirmed invalid; but she can see her friends. And now for my little scheme. I want to give her a surprise-party from all her neighbors, and I want to give it now. It 's all right. Gretchen has seen her

maid, and Mrs. Blake knows just enough to be willing to have me bring a few friends."

Miss Pix looked about, with a little anxiety peeping out of her good-souled, eager face. But the company was so melted down that she could now mould it at pleasure, and no opposition was made. Mr. Manlius volunteered to enlighten Doctor Chocker; but he made so long a preamble that the old scholar turned, with considerable impatience, to Miss Pix, who soon put him in good humor, and secured his coöperation, though not without his indulging in some sinful and unneighborly remarks to Nicholas.

It proved unnecessary to go into the court, for these two houses happened to have a connection, which Miss Pix made use of, the door having been left open all the evening, that Mrs. Blake might catch some whiffs of the entertainment. Gretchen appeared in the doorway, bearing on a salver a great cake, made with her own hands, having Mrs. Blake's initials, in colored letters, on the frosting, and the whole surrounded by fifty little wax tapers, indicating her age, which all counted, and all counted differently, giving opportunity to the four musical friends to enter upon a fresh and lively discussion. The party was marshaled by Miss Pix in the order of houses, while she herself squeezed past them all on the staircase, to usher them into Mrs. Blake's presence.

Mrs. Blake was sitting in her reclining-chair as Miss Pix entered with her retinue. The room was in perfect order, and had about it such an air of neatness and purity that one felt one's self in a haven of rest upon crossing the threshold. The invalid sat quiet and at ease, looking forth upon the scene before her as if so safely moored that no troubling of the elements could ever reach her. Here had she lived, year after year,

almost alone with herself, though now the big-souled little music-teacher was her constant visitor; but the entrance of all her neighbors seemed in no wise to agitate her placid demeanor. She greeted Miss Pix with a pleased smile; and all being now in the room, the bustling little woman, at the very zenith of her sunny course, took her stand and said, —

"This is my company, dear Mrs. Blake. These are all neighbors of ours, living in the court, or close by. We have been having a right merry time, and now we can't break up without bringing you our good wishes, — our Christmas good wishes, and our birthday good wishes," said Miss Pix, with a little oratorical flourish, which brought Gretchen to the front with her illuminated cake, which she positively could not have held another moment, so heavy had it grown, even for her stout arms.

Mrs. Blake laughed gently and with a delighted look examined the great cake, with her initials, and did not need to count the wax tapers. It was placed on a stand, and she said, —

"Now I should like to entertain my guests, and, if you will let me, I will give you each a piece of my cake, — for it all belongs to me, after Miss Pix's graceful presentation; and if Miss Pix will be so good, I will ask her to make me personally acquainted with each of you."

So a knife was brought, and Mrs. Blake cut a generous piece, when Doctor Chocker was introduced, with great gesticulation on the part of Miss Pix.

"I am glad to see you, Doctor Chocker," said Mrs. Blake, distinctly, but quietly, into his trumpet. "Do you let your patients eat cake? Try this, and see if it is n't good for me."

"If I were a doctor of medicine," said he, jerkily,

"I should bring my patients to see you;" at which Miss Pix nodded to him most vehemently, and the Doctor wagged his ear-trumpet in delight at the retort which he thought he had made.

Mr. Le Clear was introduced, and took his cake gracefully, saying, "I hope another year will see you at a Christmas-party of Miss Pix's;" but Mrs. Blake smiled, and said, "This is my little lot of earth, and I am sure there is a patch of stars above."

Mr. Manlius and wife came up together, he somewhat lumbering, as if Mrs. Blake's character were too much for his discernment, and Mrs. Manlius not quite sure of herself when her husband seemed embarrassed.

"This is really too funny," said Mrs. Blake, merrily; "as if I were a very benevolent person, doling out my charity of cake on Christmas eve. Do, Mr. Manlius, take a large piece; and I am sure your wife will take some home to the children."

"What wonderful insight!" said Mr. Manlius, turning about to Nicholas, and drawing in his breath. "We have children, — two. That woman has a deep character, Mr. Judge."

"Mrs. Starkey, also of Number Three," said the mistress of ceremonies; "and Mr. Nicholas Judge, arrived only this evening."

"Nicholas Judge!" said Mrs. Blake, losing the color which the excitement had brought, and dropping the knife.

"My nephew," explained Mrs. Starkey. "Just came this evening, and found me at home. Never saw him before. Must tell you all about it." And she was plunging with alacrity into the delightful subject, with all its variations.

Mrs. Blake looked at Nicholas, while the color came and went in her cheeks.

"Stop!" said she, decisively, to Mrs. Starkey, and half rising, she leaned forward to Nicholas, and said rapidly, with an energy which seemed to be summoned from every part of her system, —

"Are you the son of Alice Brown Judge?"

"Yes, yes," said Nicholas, tumultuously; "and you, —you are her sister. I see it, I see it. It must be so. You are my Aunt Eunice," he exclaimed, as she sank back in her chair exhausted, but reaching out her arms to him.

"That young man is a base impostor!" said Mr. Manlius aloud, with his hand in his waistcoat; while Mrs. Manlius looked on deprecatingly, but as if too, too aware of the sad fact. "I said so to my wife in private, — I read it in his face, — and now I declare it publicly. That man is a base impostor!"

"Dear, dear, I don't understand it at all!" said the unfortunate Mrs. Starkey. "I thought, to be sure, that Nicholas was my nephew. Never saw him before, but he said he was; and now, now, I don't know what I shall do!" and the poor lady, suddenly bereft of her fortune, began to wipe her moist eyes; "but perhaps," she added, with a bright, though transient gleam of hope, "we are both aunts to him."

"That cannot be," said Nicholas, kindly, who left his aunt to set the company right, if possible. "My dear friend," he said, taking Mrs. Starkey's hand, "it has been a mistake, brought on by my heedlessness. I knew only that my aunt's name had been Eunice Brown. It chanced that yours was the same name. I happened to come upon you first in my search, and did not dream it possible that there could be two in the same court. Everything seemed to tally; and I was too pleased at finding the only relation I had in the wide world to ask many questions. But when I saw

that my aunt knew who I was, and saw the likeness between her and the picture I had seen of my mother, I perceived my mistake at once. We will remain friends, though, — shall we not?"

Mrs. Starkey was too much bewildered to refuse any compromise; but Mr. Manlius stepped forward, having his claim as a private officer of justice.

"I must still demand an explanation, sir; how it is that in this mixed assembly the learned Dr. Chocker addresses you as Mr. Le Clear, and you not decline the title;" and Mr. Manlius looked, as if for a witness, to Doctor Chocker, who was eating his cake with great solemnity, holding his ear-trumpet in hopes of catching an occasional word.

"That would require too long an explanation," said Nicholas, smiling; "but you shall have it some time in private. Mr. Le Clear himself will no doubt tell you;" which Mr. Le Clear, an amused spectator of the scene, cheerfully promised to do.

The company had been so stirred up by this revelation, that they came near retreating at once to Miss Pix's to talk it over, to the dismay of the four musical gentlemen, who had not yet been presented, and especially who had not yet got any cake. Miss Pix, though in a transport of joy, had an eye for everything, and, discovering this, insisted on presenting them in a body to Mrs. Blake, in consideration of her fatigue. They bowed simultaneously, and stood before her like bashful school-boys; while Nicholas assumed the knife in behalf of his aunt, distributing with equal liberality, when they retired in high glee over the new version of his history, which Mr. Schmauker for the sake of displaying his acumen, stoutly declared to be spurious. Gretchen also was served with a monstrous slice; and

then the company bade good-by to the aunt and nephew, who began anew their glad recognition.

It was a noisy set of people who left Miss Pix's house. That little lady stood in the door-way, and sent off each with such a merry blessing that it lasted long after the doors of the other houses were closed.

CHAPTER III.

THE intelligence office of Mr. Soprian Manlius was in a building that bore upon its front in gilt letters, the sign TEMPLE, though to what purposes it was sacred, or how it was less secular than the adjoining buildings, a stranger might find it hard to guess. Perhaps, seeing in a window by the entrance an assortment of legs and arms jauntily arranged, he might fancy that the devotees of the Temple had left on exhibition such members as they had been willing to sacrifice for conscience' sake. A little farther on would appear another window set off with watches and other personal jewelry, deposited, it might be, as votive offerings. Yet again a window displaying a great variety of medicines and tempting decoctions might lead the puzzled stranger to think that he was standing before the Temple of Health; but then, why the musical instruments in the window just beyond? were they in readiness so that the sick man entering the Temple and issuing forth as soon as he had swallowed the life-giving root, might at once seize upon some brazen trumpet to proclaim his cure and give expression to his joy? Nor would one, penetrating the interior, discover at first sight many signs of special sanctity. Going to different doors, opening upon inner shrines, he could have his teeth drawn one by one, and if this should irritate him, he would find at hand an electrical room where he could be magnetically soothed.

In one of the innermost recesses of this Temple was the oracle of Manlius, advertised to give forth daily responses between the hours of eight A. M. and six P. M. Hither flocked anxious persons who often went away, like the votaries of old, sadder but not wiser than when they came. Ambiguous responses were given out by the oracle. Mr. Manlius threw an air of mystery over his cave by issuing forth at the sound of an approaching visitor and holding first a parley outside the door. He seemed to say, "I have in that office untold treasure of servants worth their weight in gold. I dare not expose them at once to the temptation of the outer world." If the parley promised to be satisfactory, then he would summon one after another and allow them in his presence to be catechised.

About a fortnight after the Christmas surprise in Five-Sisters Court, at the close of an afternoon, Mr. Manlius, sitting in the midst of his flock, heard steps in the hall and at once moved out, encountering there his new neighbor, Nicholas Judge. Something, either within himself or outside Mr. Manlius, told Nicholas that he was not especially welcome, for he hastened to address him with a half apology.

"I 'm afraid I don't stand in need of your professional services, Mr. Manlius. I just dropped in on my way to the court, as it was about your hour of closing. Have you had a busy day?"

"Yes, Mr. Judge," said the intelligence officer, "a very busy day. The demand for first-class girls continues unabated. We 're scouring the country for help. Mr. Sope, my paid agent in Nova Scotia, writes that he has shipped ten cooks per steamer; they will arrive on the tenth. You 're not wanting a cook, Mr. Judge?"

Nicholas shook his head. "We get along very

well," said he, "with Hannah. My aunt and I do not make a large household to care for."

"I 've got a cook in there," said Mr. Manlius, lowering his voice to a mysterious whisper, "that I should be 'most afraid to let you see, if you were wanting one. She 's perfect, sir, but she 'd make you jump, she 'd make you jump."

"Why, is she so frightful looking?" asked Nicholas, "or has she some electric power over people?"

"It 's her price," whispered Mr. Manlius, and approaching Nicholas for fear of being overheard by the paragon of cooks, he added "five dollars!" and then threw his head back in an artistic manner, to watch the effect of his announcement. Nicholas gave a hypocritical little start, proportioned to the amount which he would have jumped if the electric cook had been in Mr. Manlius's place, though in his soul he thought her rather cheap.

"But I keep her safe," said the officer, looking into the office as if to assure himself that she had not been so startled by the thought of her own valuation as to jump out of the window. "I keep her safe and I only bring her out when some nabob comes. Some nabob."

At these words, some one was heard approaching and Mr. Manlius, always expecting the nabob that was to carry off the five-dollar prize without sustaining any personal injury or undue elation, took advantage of his companion's surname and giving a sonorous measure to his voice, continued a hypothetical conversation.

"Well, Judge, as I was saying about the cook and the waiter-girl. The cook has lived seventeen years in one place, and why does she leave? Only because the master and mistress both die, all at once, and there is no one left in the family. And the waiter-girl, Judge," — but at this point the nabob, if it were he

who was approaching, turned aside from the pair and entered the room of one of the dentists of the Temple. Whilst he was having his teeth drawn, Mr. Manlius suspended his professional harangue and rather abruptly entered upon another line of talk by asking, —

"Mr. Judge, you have been in town now two or three weeks and have looked about you a little; what business do you propose to follow?"

Nicholas hesitated and with an embarrassed manner, replied, —

"I have hardly been here long enough to settle down to anything yet. That is, I have not yet connected myself with any firm."

"And what is your trade, sir?" pursued Mr. Manlius. "What did your father bring you up to?"

"I think my father never intended that I should enter a business life," said Nicholas, "my tastes were somewhat like his, and led me rather to the study of nature."

"Then what brought you to town?" asked his inquisitor, eying him sharply. "Nature, sir, should be studied in the open fields, where she may be seen freely and at all hours. But here, we men of business have to suit ourselves to the public. I am the slave of the public, Judge. It comes all day in carriages and I have to turn it away, and why? because it is unreasonable. Will you believe it, Judge, in that office sits a woman, Martha Jewmer, the cook I just now mentioned, who would be a treasure to any family. In all the wide range of my experience, Judge, I never saw a girl who more completely came up to the beau ideal. She has just come back to me, as I said, simply because the family has died, and Judge" — but here the flow of Mr. Manlius's oratory was again turned off, since the coming nabob, whose steps were heard just as

the intelligence officer again took up his professional hose, also turned aside and entered the room of the Temple's electrician, there to be soothed by gentle prickles. With great facility Mr. Manlius seized again the social hose and resumed his play upon Nicholas.

"But Mr. Judge, where is nature to be found in the city? Will you seek her in the shops?"

"I saw some signs of her, as I entered this building," said Nicholas, smiling. "But one can at least make some experiments in the city, and I — I have not yet made all my arrangements, Mr. Manlius. By the way, how do you all do at home? I hope Mrs. Starkey is well.

"Mrs. Starkey is well. She is better than Mrs. Manlius, Mr. Judge. My wife sometimes says to me, 'Soprian, don't you think we might afford to keep a girl?' and I reply, 'Caroline, I would bring you home Martha Jewmer this night if I could. I would spare no expense to lighten your labors, but we have a duty to perform toward Eunice Starkey. We must protect and shelter her, we must feed and clothe her, and so long as that defenseless woman is under our roof, I fear we shall have to continue our course of self-denial.' But virtue brings its reward, Mr. Judge, its reward," and Mr. Manlius gazed fixedly toward the distant staircase as if he expected virtue to come up, two steps at a time with a crown or some other appropriate emblem with which to deck his self-sacrificing brow. Again was heard the sound of approaching steps and again the intelligence officer, aroused from his reverie, took up his professional hose.

"My dear Judge, you could have that cook, because I know you for a person of integrity, but the character of these girls is in my hands. I see at a glance when

they come in what sort they are, and if they 're not right, I say — 'this is no place for you.' Now, Martha Jewmer is true gold. Throw her down on the counter and she 'd ring. No base metal there. Twenty years experience has made me an adept. I can tell counterfeit girls. I can tell counterfeit people everywhere." At this he looked steadily at Nicholas, in apparent forgetfulness of the coming nabob, and so hard did he look that Nicholas Judge began in his country simplicity to blush, and to have an uneasy feeling that this far-sighted Manlius was detecting the alloy in his material. But now voices were heard in the passage, and Mrs. Starkey appeared, with Mr. Manlius's two children, as if impersonating virtue and her rewards. Nicholas had seen Mrs. Starkey more than once since the evening when he had so suddenly claimed and as suddenly relinquished the place of nephew to her, and was familiar with the ordinary mood of her nature, which was by no means an excitable or voluble one. One seeing her now would observe a mild, shall we say forlorn looking woman, clad in a rusty black gown and bearing in her manner the consciousness of being weak and insignificant, without the possibility of being restored to anything like brightness of life ; no warm coals within her to be fanned and fed into a new flame, and so thin and meagre, so attenuated by some miserable experience that it would seem as if no sunshine from without, though enveloping her in its glad robes, could ever awaken a sympathetic smile. If this were virtue, Mr. Manlius was likely to prefer the rewards, who occupied stations on each side of virtue like bulwarks bracing her weak structure. These maidens were Elizabeth and Desire Manlius, of equal stature, but unequal in endowments. Elizabeth, as Mr. Manlius was fond of saying in his occasional inventory of

his daughter's excellences, was intellectual and highly organized, while Desire, whose name the mother insisted had been given by her husband in a moment of prophetic inspiration, was of mercurial temperament, "ever reaching" in her father's words "after something beyond her," — and generally breaking it, he might have added, if it was at all fragile. Desire, in spite of her grasping weakness, was the mother's favorite, while Elizabeth, by her promise of great powers of mind partially fulfilled now in her thirteenth year, was the pride of her father, who recognized in her a repetition of his own intellectual grandeur. Desire, except in the alternate hours of reproof and punishment, was called Dizzy, with some reference doubtless to a rotary motion to which she had been addicted from early childhood and which, carried on under adverse circumstances and too long persisted in, was apt to end in a tottering faintness, as agreeable from some cause to herself as it was alarming to by-standers. But Elizabeth had passed the years of childish nomenclature. In infancy, and while still on words of one syllable, before the germ of her intellect was discernible by any but the far-sighted father, she was called Liz. Passing into words of two syllables and now exciting fond expectations, she became Lizzy. When she entered upon the long list of trisyllabic words, her proud father spoke of her as his Eliza, but when, nearing the end of her spelling course she managed with ease words of four syllables and garnished her conversation with them, she became once and forever Elizabeth, coming, so to speak, into entire possession of the property, which had been held thus far in trust by others.

"The Doctor sent this afternoon, and Caroline went at four o'clock and desired me to bring you the children at six, and to say that if you needed to go home,

I could go with the children, and the key of the bureau is in the right hand upper little drawer in a button-box," said Mrs. Starkey, as if repeating a lesson learnt with some difficulty.

"And I am going to ask Uncle Doctor to show us his skull," added Elizabeth, while Dizzy expressed her general satisfaction by spinning like a teetotum till she fell at Nicholas's feet as if the world were all the game of the Mansion of Happiness, and she had dropped upon a high number. Nicholas caught her up, and held her drooping in front of him until she could recover her footing.

"Desire," said Mr. Manlius, severely, "I can have no reeling here in the Temple, no, nor at your uncle's. What would the Doctor think of you! Mr. Judge, I hope you will make allowances for Dizzy's behavior. Her character is not what I could wish it to be, but she has her sister before her; there is hope. As Mrs. Starkey has said, we are going out for a social evening at Mrs. Manlius's brother's, the Doctor. It is one of the necessary evils attendant upon the life of a physician in large practice, that he cannot always command his hours of relaxation. To-day the Doctor sends word that he will be able to be at the social board, and we take the opportunity which is offered to mingle in his society; but he is liable to be called away at any moment, Mr. Judge. The mayor may die while we are at the tea-table and the Doctor will have to go; a physician's time is not his own."

"And he has a real skull," said Elizabeth, "and I am going to find the sutures."

"She will find them, Mr. Judge, depend upon it," said the proud father, "they won't escape her. But we must go. I shan't go home, Eunice. This is an informal gathering and we stand on no ceremony at the Doctor's."

"Let me walk with you," said Nicholas to Mrs. Starkey, "I am on my way to the Court;" and leaving Mr. Manlius and his daughters, he walked with Mrs. Starkey, who neither accepted nor rejected his offer, out of the Temple and so through the streets that led to Five-Sisters Court. The walk was a slippery one, and Nicholas Judge, giving his arm to the poor, thin body who slid beside him, tried to cheer her up and break the dull monotony of her manner. She answered his questions in a slow and dilatory fashion, as if the thought had to be sent for a great distance and was not always ready at the summons. He essayed jesting, but so bewildered her that he forbore, and yet besides the pity for such a lonely body, he felt he knew not why, a certain respect for her, as if some power might suddenly reveal in her face and form, now scrawled with the lines of hard circumstance, a beauty indelible in its vital lines.

Thus at least did he build in his own mind, though he found it hard afterward to give any reason for his feeling, when, having seen Mrs. Starkey safely home, he entered the next house and sat at tea in his aunt's chamber, where Miss Betsey Pix also was found.

"Why is it, aunt," said he, "that I should feel so strangely about Mrs. Starkey? I see that she is forlorn and living a hopeless sort of life, and yet I do not merely pity her. I feel as if she could make me suddenly see that she was far above me in real nobleness of character."

"Ah, Mr. Nicholas," said Miss Pix, with a twinkle in her little eye. "It is because there is character in Mrs. Starkey. She is a woman of character, sir, and I sometimes say to Mrs. Manlius, 'Caroline, if the world knew Eunice Starkey, they would be amazed,'" and here Miss Pix threw herself back after Mr. Man-

lius's fashion and looked into the distance, as if she saw the world coming from afar to get a view of Mrs. Starkey. Nicholas laughed and said, —

"Well, there is Mr. Manlius. If he and his wife have done so much for Mrs. Starkey, why does n't she seem to show some gratitude? But she is as indifferent, I should think, to everything, as if she were their servant."

"Dear me!" said Miss Pix, getting a little excited, "I can tell you, you are not far wrong, Master Nicholas. I do believe she is their servant. Think of her, poor thing, sitting there all alone this cold night, and the family all out having a good time. I declare, I do find it real hard to love Mr. Manlius, if he is my neighbor," and little Miss Pix looked ruefully at the fire and shook her head over her hard-heartedness. She brightened up suddenly with a happy thought.

"Why not, dear Mrs. Blake, ask Mrs. Starkey to come in here this evening?"

"Well thought," said Mrs. Blake. "Run, Nicholas, and ask her to bring her work in here, and sit with us."

"Her work, indeed!" said Miss Pix, with bubbling indignation. "I 'm thinking Nicholas will have to carry the ironing-board for her, or the big pots that are to be scoured." But Nicholas was off, and after a long time returned with an air of anxious triumph, as if fearful that Mrs. Starkey, whom he had enticed with many entreaties thus far, might slip off at the last moment. The two women gave her a kind greeting, Miss Pix seizing her hand and shaking it till it brought a glow into their faces, and Mrs. Blake from the quiet arm-chair to which fortune had bound her, receiving the weary-looking woman with a benediction of peace in her countenance.

"What a singular thing it is," said Nicholas, eager to start some lively conversation, "that your maiden name, aunt, and Mrs. Starkey's should have been the same, and more singular that two Eunice Browns should be living in the same small court."

"I am Eunice Starkey," said their visitor, with a troubled expression.

"Yes, and aunt is Eunice Blake," explained Nicholas, "but once you were both Eunice Browns."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Blake, "we shall prove to be near relations, though there are a good many Browns. Where was your birth-place, Mrs. Starkey?"

"Hark! did n't I hear them?" said Mrs. Starkey, jumping up.

"No, no," said Nicholas. "It is not near time for them to return. We are to have a pleasant evening together, unless, you know, the Mayor should die; that might break up the Doctor's party." But Mrs. Starkey was ill at ease, and stood irresolute; though Miss Pix was profuse in her assurances, and Nicholas offered to sit at the front window and keep watch, and Mrs. Blake used her gentlest entreaties, so doubtful and troubled did she seem, that, out of very kindness, Nicholas at last took her back to her solitude.

"I wish I could understand it," said he, coming back. "She said to me when I left her, 'You 're a good young man, Mr. Judge. You 're a good young man. I had n't ought to have gone in.' And then she drew me toward her, and half whispered, 'You won't say anything about it, will ye?' I declare," added Nicholas, "there was a sadness in her voice that made me, — made me feel, I don't know how."

"Take care!" laughed Miss Pix, shaking her finger, "I am afraid you will have trouble in the world, if you let yourself be affected in that way by voices." Then

they talked of other matters, and at last Miss Pix returned to her home, leaving Nicholas and his aunt alone. They sat for some time in silence, when Nicholas said: —

"I cannot get my mind off Mrs. Starkey, aunt; and the more I think of it the more I mistrust Mr. Manlius. There is something about him — What made Mrs. Starkey hope I would n't say anything about it? Was she afraid I would tell him?"

"So I should think. She seems to be in some terror of him, and yet when she was here Christmas eve, she seemed to be on familiar terms enough with him."

"That was different. You know what Mr. Manlius says about her, that she is subject to occasional fits of volubility, when she is not — not quite responsible. And he kept a sharp eye on her all the evening. He seems to be covering something up, when he stretches out his great paws over her, as he did this afternoon when she came with the children."

"After all, this may be nothing more than his foolish manner, Nicholas. Pray do not let us begin with being suspicious of our next door neighbors. I should like, though, to give a little comfort to Mrs. Starkey, without seeming to interfere with Mr. Manlius's family. Ah, if people had only the eyes to see that have been given to me, they would find their comfort right at hand. How beautiful the whole world must be, if this one little chamber where I have lived these many years, is so full of pleasant things."

Nicholas looked about him with a half-smile and thought that the pleasant things, had mostly been sent forth to lodge in invisible places by the cunning workmanship of his aunt's peaceful mind. With this thought he bade Mrs. Blake good-night, "for now," he said, "I must do a little work."

At the same hour Mr. and Mrs. Manlius, having returned with their children from the Doctor's, were alone in their room. The house had been locked up; the big Britannia ice-pitcher and the half-dozen silver spoons which constituted their plate had been brought upstairs by their own hands and locked up in a trunk, the key of which Mrs. Manlius put behind the looking-glass, a nightly precaution which seemed to enhance the value of the articles, and Elizabeth and Dizzy had been sent to bed, the one to dream of a great skull along whose sutures she was led up to the very gates of the Temple of knowledge, and the other even in her sleep sensible of a most delightful whirling motion in which she was always on the verge of prostration.

"Hark!" said Mr. Manlius to his wife. She listened, expecting robbers.

"Where is it?" said she, in a frightened whisper.

"Caroline," said he, in an awful undertone, "It is in the next house. Listen! It's Judge." There was a confused sound in the room of Mrs. Blake's house adjoining theirs, which seemed to proceed from something betwixt a pounding and a rolling.

"Caroline," said Mr. Manlius again, "I must penetrate this mystery. This is not the first night that I have heard that sound. I have my suspicions, and I owe my duty to my neighbors. I cannot tell you more now, but if your husband falls, you may know that it is in the cause of virtue."

This was the only consolation that Mrs. Manlius was allowed to enjoy, for her husband, big with some solemn duty to be discharged, preserved significant silence, out of which she constructed various possibilities; as that thieves were nightly at work next door and would burrow through into their own house some day, or that there was some gunpowder plot by which the court was

to be blown up, and that Mr. Manlius, setting a watch, was to appear at the last moment, arrest the plotters, and extinguish the slow match. Haunted by these and more direful creations of her imagination, she dropped asleep, but it was long before sleep visited her husband's eyelids. Mr. Manlius was thinking.

The next morning Mr. Manlius might have been seen, cane in hand, coming out of his house and stepping along the court with an abstracted air, as if he were only just aware of houses and solid earth. He stopped, turned about, and made as if he would go back for something which he had left in the top story of his house, for he cast his eyes thither in a reflective way, humming a tune to himself, and allowing his outward eye to search the roofs of the houses, while his inner eye seemed rolling about his own orderly interior in search of some forgotten purpose. As has been said, the house adjoining his own, occupied by the widow Blake and her new-found nephew, was set back from the others in a jog of the court, so that its front was not on a line with its neighbor, but its face was the same and the arrangement of rooms seemed to correspond. It was toward its upper windows that Mr. Manlius's eye was mechanically set, and the windows looked back quite as blankly, having an unmoving lid of white curtain. His eye dropped upon the ground, he traced a pattern on the pavement with his cane and then resumed his walk slowly up the court, his hands behind him after the manner of most pictured philosophers.

But once out of the court, Mr. Manlius recovered his promptness, and turning a corner went quickly up Amory Street, and going into Trowel Street made another bend, by which, passing down an alley, he was brought to the rear of the houses in Five Sisters Court. From this point he could study the houses without dan-

ger of being misunderstood, and accordingly he did his work in a business-like way, taking a survey of the windows as before, and establishing the general correspondence which existed in front. Moreover, he took from his pocket a memorandum book and made a diagram of the rear elevation, putting in the windows, and carefully noting the number of panes in each, "for," as he remarked to himself, "one never knows to a certainty how much he may have to depend upon apparently unimportant particulars in these things."

What were these things? Mr. Manlius for one would not have answered, even to a question from his anxious wife. Enough to say that Mr. Manlius was thinking, that he was laying deep plans, and that time would show whether his far seeing eye had not penetrated the veil of apparent innocence and exposed to public view an Infamous Destroyer of Peace. Like a wise general, having an arduous campaign before him, he had made a careful reconnoisance of the ground upon which his operations were to be carried on, and with the result, so far as it could be committed to paper, carefully buttoned in his inner pocket, but the more important train of thought deposited in the burglar proof safe of his own head, he went about his daily business.

But an ordinary observer could scarcely fail to see that, although Mr. Manlius gave his attention to such petty details as furnishing chambermaids at ten and six to housekeepers who used only that old style of calculation, his mind was absent on more weighty matters. He remained at his post, however, till evening, when he moved slowly homeward and entered his house. Mrs. Manlius followed him with her eye, as he passed in and out or sat meditatively; she did not dare to plumb his thoughts, but gave the more rein to her own imagination, and was now quite prepared to believe that Nich-

olas Judge, the arch enemy as she felt, was at that moment laying a train of gunpowder under the house, and would presently be found, like a modern Guy Faux, lighting the gas preliminary to his dire deed. The children, too, were rather awed by their father's solemn countenance, and Dizzy for once refrained from her customary prancing in the rocking-chair before going to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

And now, when the children had been sent to bed, Mr. Manlius went to his room and after a while descended, dressed in the most careful manner.

"Wife," said he, drawing on a woolen glove, "I am going to make a friendly call upon our neighbor, Mrs. Blake;" but though these were simple words, there was something in his manner ominous of a deeper intention, which made his wife, sensitive to all the finer movements of his nature, say in alarm, —

"Oh, Soprian! if anything should happen!"

"It is proper, Caroline, that I should call upon my next neighbor. I know what society requires of me;" and one would have thought from his lofty tone that society required him, at whatever sacrifice of personal comfort, to assume the highest dignity. So he stepped out gravely, as well bundled up as if he were going to the North Pole instead of to the next house. He stopped, however, on the doorstep of Mrs. Blake's house, in order to get out the visiting card with which he had forearmed himself. The card bore his name and title, Soprian Manlius, Esq., written with great energy and efflorescence by a young man who sat in the hall of one of the hotels, before a little table with an exceedingly fine-nibbed pen, and kept specimens of his work about him, visiting cards written for such long drawn and liquid names as Montgomery, Cholmondely, and the like. He had allowed his pen to hover in the

air a moment, then descend in swallow-like dips to the card, while Mr. Manlius spelled his name for him. "Esq.," added Mr. Manlius. "But we never add that," said the unfortunate young man, who had prided himself on centring the name in the card. "I am a justice of the peace," said Mr. Manlius, with dignity. "Put Esq. at the end;" and so the young man destroyed the symmetry. "Now put my residence on, 3 Amory Court. Put it in the right hand corner, sir. I want room for my business quarters." The young man obeyed. "Now, office, Room No. 9, Temple. Put that in the left hand corner. Is there room for office hours?" he added, doubtfully, turning his head and getting a side view of the card, which had been so entwined with the tendrils of the several capital letters as to be somewhat overrun. "I hardly think so," said the young man, faintly protesting thus against further degradation of his art, and Mr. Manlius, tolerably content with the general effect, decided to leave the card as it now stood.

It was this card which he now handed to Mrs. Blake's maid when she opened the door, and let him into the house.

"Take that to your mistress," said he, "and tell her that Mr. Manlius has called." Neither the maid nor Mrs. Blake, however, seemed so much impressed with the fact of the call as Mr. Manlius himself. Mrs. Blake saw him, as she must needs see every one who came, in her chamber, where she was imprisoned.

"You will excuse me from rising," she said, pleasantly, reaching out her hand. "I have to play the part of a very fine lady to conceal the fact that I am a prisoner. I am sorry my nephew is not at home this evening to see you. He rarely goes out."

"I see him from time to time," said Mr. Manlius,

who felt less at his ease in this white room with this gentle, fair lady before him. "I trust he is well."

"Quite well."

"I trust you are well, madam?"

"Thank you, I am never otherwise than as you see me. I hope Mrs. Manlius may be able to come to see me. You know I can hardly return calls. Mrs. Starkey, also, I should be very glad to see. We owe a good deal to Miss Pix for shaking us all together, as she did Christmas eve."

"A lively woman, a lively woman," said Mr. Manlius, shaking his head a little dubiously, for a counterpoise of seriousness. "Such characters are a little — a little hasty. But she means well," he added, not wishing wholly to abandon Miss Pix to her own hastiness. "I hope you find your nephew's character well balanced, Mrs. Blake? a person you can put your finger on and know you have him. I say to girls sometimes, when they come to me for employment, 'Have you a good character?' If you have, I can find a place for you; otherwise, no. You may get wages, but you won't get a permanent place. It 's everything, Mrs. Blake. A well-balanced character is everything;" and Mr. Manlius, leaning back in his chair, seemed to survey Mrs. Blake with artistic criticism. "Your nephew, now, how do you find his character, on the whole?"

"I have every reason to trust him," she said, quietly. "It is a pleasure to me to have one about me who is so simple and unaffected. I see so few people that his freshness is peculiarly attractive to me."

"Simple, ma'am? Well," and he half closed his eyes, "I have had to study character a good deal, it 's my profession, so to speak, and I 've noticed that your simple people are sometimes very deep. Now you

would n't think it perhaps, ma'am, but I've had girls come to me just fresh from the country, looking like milkmaids, and I've had to say, 'No, you must n't come here. 'T a'n't no use. You may go to the Bureau, but you must n't come to the Temple.' And they go, ma'am; dozens of 'em. But my paid agent, Mr. Sope, down in Nova Scotia, he looks out to get only A Number One girls. He don't ship them otherwise. Your nephew now, ma'am, has he tried to get any employment? But perhaps he don't mean to settle down to any regular trade?"

"He has studied medicine with his father in the country," said Mrs. Blake. "I think he has had unusual opportunities in that direction." A gleam of intelligence darted across Mr. Manlius's face. He drew a little memorandum book from his pocket.

"Excuse me, madam," said he, "I have thought of something which I should be sorry to have escape me, and with your permission I will make a note of it." And so saying, he wet the end of a black lead pencil and jotted something down in his memorandum book. He continued to hold the latter somewhat magisterially in his hand, as he proceeded with his inquiries.

"Medicine, I think you said, madam. I had thoughts of studying medicine once myself. It is a noble occupation. Mrs. Manlius's brother is a doctor — Doctor Simmons; you have heard of him, I presume; a man very eminent in his profession. So your nephew is a doctor! learned, I suppose, in drugs, in simples, and compounds?"

"He can hardly be called learned yet, nor is he entitled to the name of doctor. He never has taken a degree, nor am I sure that he intends to practice medicine."

"Ah! does not intend to practice medicine. Excuse

me, I just thought of something," and again he had recourse to his note-book.

"What, then, will his study lead him to, Mrs. Blake? I have taken a great — yes, I may say a great interest in your nephew, and I do not ask these questions out of idle curiosity."

"I think he is too modest to say definitely what he expects to accomplish," said she. Mr. Manlius wrote with an abstracted air in his book, saying in a reflective way, —

"Yes, as you say, he does not say definitely what he is about. Now, would he like to have an office in the Temple, do you think, Mrs. Blake?" and he looked at her with an air of exceeding interest in her nephew. "I have influence there, and could perhaps secure an eligible apartment for him."

"We are much obliged to you, Mr. Manlius, but it is hardly necessary until Nicholas is ready to engage regularly in some occupation requiring an office. He finds his room here all that he needs."

"Yes, he can work more privately here, I suppose. By the way, your house, I take it, is arranged very much like mine. Down-stairs, a parlor, dining-room, and kitchen; on this story, this room and the one back, and the hall bed-room, and up-stairs, under the roof, two attic rooms. You have more room than we have, Mrs. Blake. Our family is larger. The girls are growing. Mrs. Starkey must have her room. Now I suppose you have some empty rooms, have n't you?"

"Not many," she answered, smiling. "My house is arranged like yours, but since my nephew came, it seems quite full. He has taken the attic for his bed-room and workshop, as he calls it, so as not to disturb me."

"Ah, then he sleeps up-stairs, does he, and works up there?"

"Yes."

"That 's a very good arrangement," said Mr. Manlius, slowly revolving his head. "Then he is quite by himself, except he lets your girl, I suppose, take care of his rooms."

"No, Hannah has a wholesome dread of his workshop, and Nicholas, being a handy young man, is quite willing to take care of his own quarters."

"I see, I see." The note-book came into play again in an absent sort of way. "He has frightened this girl by his, — his workshop, so that she keeps away. It 's a pity, ma'am, you can't go up-stairs. It must be a gratification to your nephew to have one of your intelligence and general education to aid him by advice in his work."

"I am quite content that he shall work by himself. Indeed," she added, with a twinkle, "I don't know that he would let me come if I could, for he likes his little secrets, and you know if you give a secret to a friend to keep, you never can get it back again: though I am afraid no one would be the wiser for any secret Nicholas might intrust to me." Mr. Manlius's note-book seemed to be receiving new deposits. He closed it now and placed it in his pocket.

"I am so constantly in the habit of using my memorandum book in my business, Mrs. Blake, that I have formed the habit, almost unconsciously to myself, I may say, of referring to it in society. Mrs. Manlius sometimes says that she is afraid of my book, because she thinks I put down in it various things that she says, but the fact is, my business runs in my head so that I do not like to trust my memory too far, though it is a good memory, a very retentive memory, Mrs. Blake, and so I am obliged to jot down important things that I think of, wherever I may happen to be.

I beg you will excuse my apparent want of attention, ma'am," and he bowed seriously, "but I heard every word, ma'am, every word. I hope I have n't fatigued you?"

"Not at all, Mr. Manlius."

"You have a pretty strong constitution, then?"

"Don't you think it ought to be, to stand the wear and tear of an anchorage in this room, fifteen years? Pray tell me about your children, Mr. Manlius. I have sometimes seen them from my window, as they played in the court. Are they alike in disposition?"

"They are unequally gifted, I may say, ma'am, without prejudice. My oldest daughter, Elizabeth, is the more intellectual, her sister, Desire, the more physical, if I may so say."

"Is she stouter?"

"She has more bodily agility, she is less highly developed in her mental organization. I have given my own personal attention to Elizabeth, while Desire is more childish and has been more under the supervision of her mother and Mrs. Starkey."

"Ah, the children must give a deal of pleasure to Mrs. Starkey. It is such a happiness when one is growing old to have the young about one."

"Mrs. Starkey shares all our joys and sorrows with us," said Mr. Manlius somewhat more loftily than the occasion seemed to require. "Our home is one; she goes in and out as one of the family. As I told your nephew when he came first to see her, under pretense of being her nephew" —

"I think you forget, Mr. Manlius."

"Pardon me, madam. I received him, Mrs. Starkey received him, as her nephew. But let that pass, — I told him then and there that we had sheltered Mrs.

Starkey for many years. I am not one to disown a friend or a relation either in the day of her calamity. But I will bid you good evening, madam."

"I hear my nephew's steps in the passage, Mr. Manlius. Won't you wait to see him?" At that moment Nicholas himself entered, his face ruddy with the glow of walking in the wind, and after greeting his aunt affectionately, welcomed Mr. Manlius.

"Really, this is pleasant," said he, "to come out of the cold street to this cheerful fire, and find a neighbor cosily seated here. How are Mrs. Manlius, and the children, and Mrs. Starkey?"

"They are well, quite well," said Mr. Manlius, bowing stiffly. "Mrs. Manlius rarely gets out, and my own engrossing business does not allow me to perform many social duties, except where such are imperative," and he made a movement as if to take out his notebook. "It has given me great pleasure to see your aunt, and satisfaction, Mr. Judge. It would give me pleasure if I might see you at my office some day soon; there are some little matters of business I should like to talk over with you. I was intending to leave this message with your aunt. Or perhaps, you would rather see me on your own premises. We are neighbors, Mr. Judge. Let me drop in on you in a friendly way. Your aunt tells me you have your own apartments."

Nicholas glanced at his aunt, blushed a little, and replied: "I shall be happy to see you any time, Mr. Manlius, either here or at your office. I am almost always at home in the evening, or I could call on you some afternoon, when I am down town, as I am every day."

"I won't trouble you, I won't trouble you, Mr. Judge. I will call upon you here some evening," and so saying, he bowed himself out of the room, and made his way

back to his house, where he sat for some time, studying his note-book, and occasionally making a memorandum.

"What can that man want of me, aunt?" asked Nicholas, when he had gone. "I 'm sure we don't want any of his girls, not even Martha Jewmer, that paragon of servants. Did he tell you what he wanted of me?"

"No. He asked a good many questions about you. I should almost say he was an amateur census-taker."

"Anyway, I don't like him," said Nicholas, energetically, "and I think he 's a good deal of a humbug."

"Tut, tut, Nicholas. That 's too easy a word to apply. I can't say I take very kindly to Mr. Manlius myself, but insincerity is such a terrible blot that I don't like to find it too readily in any one. Tell me how you enjoyed your concert."

"Oh, aunt, it was wonderful. You know I never heard much music, but if I had never heard a sound I think I should have caught some enthusiasm from Miss Pix, who fairly quivered with excitement. Little Mr. Windgraff came down between the parts, and Miss Pix seized his hand and shook it, till the people about us stared and smiled. But Mr. Windgraff began talking at once. 'Yes, it 's very fine,' said he, 'but I heard this same great violinist play just the same twenty years ago. He has not grown at all, Miss Pix.' Then Miss Pix retorted: 'I hope, then, he 'll play so through all eternity, Mr. Windgraff,' and they both laughed and chatted, and talked in German, and I felt like an ignoramus."

"You ought to, in music, beside Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff. It is their profession. But you could enjoy it."

"Enjoy it! I must have acted like a lunatic when we came away, for Miss Pix even became alarmed finally, and said, 'Take care, Nicholas. Your char-

acter is not well balanced!' Aunt, if I had much to do with Mr. Manlius, I know I should knock him down finally."

"To prove your own equipoise? Never mind Mr. Manlius, Nicholas. He can go his own way; he will hardly come much in yours."

But Mr. Manlius had no intention of keeping out of the way of Nicholas Judge. It was not many evenings after this that he again called, and this time, without offering his card, asked for Mr. Judge. The servant was opening the door of the parlor.

"No need," said Mr. Manlius, with suavity. "I will go right up to Mr. Judge's room," and began ascending the stairs, without heeding the remonstrance of Hannah, who had been instructed never to show any one to the top of the house.

"Indeed, sir," she persisted, running after him; "if you will take a seat in the parlor, Mr. Manlius, I'll call Mr. Nicholas; but he never sees any one upstairs."

"Never mind, my good girl," said he, waving her back clumsily, and moving on without turning. "We are old friends; he's expecting me." But Hannah's voice, and his own, had made such a commotion by this time, that Nicholas himself appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Manlius," said he; "I'll come right down."

"Oh, no matter, I'll take you as I find you," said that gentleman, laboring on, well used to the plan of the house, which corresponded to his own. Nicholas had, however, closed the door behind him, and was on his way down-stairs.

"My room is quite in disorder," said he, and his own face was somewhat confused. "It's hardly the

place in which to see people. In fact," he added, as he chased his guest in a dignified way down-stairs; "I do as I please there, and even Hannah never enters it now. I think she has a fancy that I keep all sorts of dangerous instruments or concoctions in it, and so has a wholesome dread of going there, which I have no reason to remove."

"Yet a wholly unreasonable dread, I suppose now," said Mr. Manlius, stroking his chin and looking slyly at him.

"Not altogether," said Nicholas. "Ignorant people may unintentionally do terrible damage with very simple things."

"With poisons now, for example," said Mr. Manlius, blandly. At the mention of the word, Nicholas trembled violently and turned away from his visitor. He rose and crossed the room, returning to find Mr. Manlius making a note in his memorandum book.

"It's a habit I have," said that gentleman, "of making notes of any matter of business that may be occupying me. As I remarked, Mr. Judge, I had a little matter that I desired to see you about. You are aware that my profession is a very absorbing one. There is immense competition, sir, in the business of providing families with domestic assistants. I have a paid agent, Mr. Sope, in the Provinces. He scours the country, Mr. Judge, but what does he find? girls are bought up, Mr. Judge, yes, sir, bought up by unprincipled men who cater for the New York market; girls of tender years are engaged before they are old enough to go into service, and are bound by these men in advance, so that it has become necessary for him to pay large sums of money to parents to induce them to use their parental authority to nullify these unjust contracts. And why are these girls so eagerly sought,

sir? because in their lowly homes they are brought up with character; they have economy, virtue, industry, what I call the cardinal points of character, and with these they can make their way anywhere, anywhere," and Mr. Manlius leaned back and seemed to see a procession of these girls putting out to sea with their characters in their hands.

"Now what I wished to say," he resumed, "when we got on that unpleasant subject a moment ago, and what I have here in my memorandum book as a minute, is that I am designing a *coup d'état*, as they say in France, by which I shall strike out into a new enterprise and render at the same time a service to the public. Mr. Judge, Nova Scotia is not the only country in the world, is it?"

"By no means," said Nicholas, without hesitation.

"Well, girls are found elsewhere; they are found in our own native country, but they are proud. I don't generally do much with American girls. They are not, as I may say, adapted by our political life to enter the houses of the wealthy as domestic assistants. But the difficulty is not insurmountable, sir. It can be overcome, and I propose to overcome it. I propose to go to some simple country place, where the contamination of the city has not yet poisoned the fountains of nature, and there lay before the young women the superior advantages of city and suburban life, and induce them to come, two by two, engaging to secure for them comfortable homes and all the social amenities. It is probably not unknown to you that such young women do leave their paternal homes to labor in factories and other like institutions, but I have in this little book tables of figures by which I can demonstrate that they lay up more of this world's goods, by engaging in domestic occupations such as befit our

native young women, than by adopting the uncertain avocations to which I have alluded. Now I have pondered this scheme for some time, and I propose testing it myself by personal contact with these young women. I shall not send any one out on so delicate an errand, Mr. Judge," — Nicholas bowed heartily, having had a vague apprehension that Mr. Manlius intended soliciting or perhaps demanding his services — "I shall go myself into the rural district. You are from the country, I believe, Mr. Judge?"

"Yes, I am from the country."

"There is a charm in the open air of nature, sir; and while I am compelled to give my attention exclusively to my engrossing business, I shall regard it as a pleasing part of my enterprise to look upon nature also," and Mr. Manlius leaned back and took a connoisseur view of nature as ideally present. "What part of the country, pray, was that in which you were accustomed to reside? I think I never had the pleasure of hearing you name it." Nicholas hesitated and looked confused. "I am from Kennebunk in Maine," continued Mr. Manlius, with dignity. "I am proud to give my nativity at any time. I am not ashamed of coming from down East, sir."

"I have nothing to be ashamed of in my birthplace," said Nicholas, quietly, "but for certain reasons, which it is unnecessary to state, I am not in the habit of referring to my former home. I am a citizen here now," he added, smiling, "and propose to exercise all my rights of citizenship, one of which I believe is to be an undistinguished atom in a crowd of atoms."

"That was a happy phrase," said Mr. Manlius; "allow me to take it down in my note-book, where I frequently preserve pregnant truths," and Mr. Manlius's pencil was busy, while he kept on talking: "Mr.

Judge declines to state where he came from. That is unfortunate for Mr. Manlius, who had intended proposing to make a selection of that place for his first experimental excursion. I was in hopes, sir, that I might obtain from you such letters of introduction to prominent persons in the neighborhood as would have facilitated my inquiries, as well as learn some particulars respecting the character of the village, and the names of some of the families that would be likely to receive with favor my proposition."

"I am sorry I cannot be of service to you, Mr. Manlius, but really I knew very few people, and I don't think any letters of introduction from me would have been of much service," and he smiled to himself.

"H'm!" said Mr. Manlius, "I regret that our interview should have been so unsatisfactory. You have a right to keep to yourself, Mr. Judge, so plain a piece of information as to where you came from. But I must say," and he rose and buttoned his coat about him, — "I must say that a young man makes a wrong start in life who conceals the facts of his beginning. I was a poor boy in Kennebunk. You may go there to-night and ask any of the middle-aged people if they remember Soprian Manlius, and I am not afraid of their verdict. You may track my course from that day to this, but you will find it in the light, Mr. Judge, in the light. There is nothing to cover up," and he looked severely at the young man.

"As I said before," said Nicholas, "there are circumstances which make it proper that I should be silent here as to my recent life, though, of course, I conceal nothing from my aunt; but all this comes from no fault of mine;" and he colored as one does who is called upon to assert his own virtue in general terms.

"I trust you will find nothing to cover up in your

present life," said Mr. Manlius, with magisterial severity, as he took leave. Nicholas passed up-stairs, did not enter his aunt's chamber, but kept on to his own room, where he went to work vigorously to throw off the disagreeable air which his visitor had managed to enwrap him with. "I shall be thankful when I am through," he said to himself, "and can make all this clear. And yet, who is Mr. Manlius? and why should I trouble myself about his good or his poor opinion of me?" Nevertheless he did find it galling to stand to this man in the relation of a suspected person. Mr. Manlius, meanwhile, though he had not accomplished either of the two purposes he had in view in his visit, was not ill-pleased with the result; indeed, the very defeat which he suffered in his attempt to examine Nicholas's workshop, and to find out his former home, constituted important testimony, in his mind, in confirmation of the theory upon which he was pursuing his investigation.

"Why should he be unwilling to see me in his workshop?" he asked himself. "I am not an ignorant person to meddle with his dangerous compounds. Why should he conceal his former residence? There is something very suspicious about that. It must be ferreted out. We must get at the bottom of this." He was meditating on this the next afternoon as he walked home from his office, when hearing a familiar voice he turned and saw Miss Pix bidding good-by to a smiling German, whom he recognized as one of the four friends he had met Christmas eve.

"You are going to the court, Miss Pix? Let me have the honor of escorting you," said Mr. Manlius. "That was one of the foreigners, I believe, that I met at your house upon the occasion of your, — your little party."

"Oh no, he is n't a foreigner," said Miss Pix. "He has been here several years, has taken out his naturalization papers, votes, and sends his children to the public schools. Oh no, Mr. Pfeiffer is not a foreigner," and she looked demurely at the bulky man beside her.

"Very good," said he, "very good. Politically he may not be. In our country we give a welcome to the oppressed of other lands and invite them to partake of the advantages which our freedom and our great institutions give them. But nature makes a difference, Miss Pix; your friend's children, or at any rate grandchildren, may become American. But he will remain a foreigner. Nature has made him a German and we cannot tear ourselves from our mother's — our mother's arms. I say to our friend Mr. Judge, sometimes, — 'you will go back some day to your pleasant country home. You will not be able to destroy the bonds by which nature holds you.' We are born with these temperaments, Miss Pix. Mr. Judge now, — I suppose when summer comes, he will go back, eh?"

"Oh no, Mr. Manlius. He will always go ahead," said the little woman, "not go back surely," and she looked slyly at him.

"Very good, very good," said the philosopher, verbally patting her on the back. "Yes, he will always go ahead, no doubt, no doubt. They will quite lose sight of him in his country village. I suppose — let me see — I think it was somewhere in the centre of the state, was it not, that he came from? I believe you mentioned the place to me once."

"If I did, I knew more then than I do now," said Miss Pix. "I never asked where he came from, and I do not remember that he ever mentioned it, but if there are any more such excellent young men left in his village, I trust they will come right up and make

themselves known. *I'm* ready to adopt any young man as good as Nicholas Judge, for a nephew." She spoke so decidedly, that it seems quite a wonder there had not sprung up some excellent young man, to take her at her word.

"It was not an idle curiosity that led me to ask," said Mr. Manlius as they turned into the court. "I am, as you are aware, not in the habit of concerning myself deeply about my neighbors' affairs, but we owe a duty to society and to our own children, and it behooves us to look well to the character of those whom we admit to our houses. When a young woman comes to me, Miss Pix, she must show her references. I tell them, 'If you have a good character, I can do anything for you, not otherwise. I have not seen Mr. Judge's references yet, Miss Pix. We must not trust too much to outward appearances."

"No, we must n't," said Miss Pix to herself, as she poked her key into the key-hole of her door, and turned it sharply. "Some of the biggest men I ever saw have been the biggest geese, — ganders though, I suppose," she corrected herself, for Miss Pix had in her day taught other things than music, and so corrected herself when necessary.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Manlius saw that he should not learn what he wished to know from Nicholas Judge or his two friends, but he was the more determined to find out where he came from. He borrowed a Business Directory of New England and pored over it evening after evening at his house, in hopes of finding some person of the name of Judge, engaged in some trade in some one of the States. Mrs. Manlius sat by him, sewing in silence, not daring to interrupt his evidently profound study; Mrs. Starkey sat grimly knitting in the corner, looking at Mr. Manlius every now and then, but quite ignorant of what was occupying his mind. His study was in vain, and he closed the book with a bang one evening and pushed it from him, looking angrily about the room.

"Caroline," he said, "what makes you keep this room so hot? You know I suffer so from excessive heat. The furnace door ought to be open." Mrs. Starkey at the word rose and left the room. "The upper door, Eunice," he called out after her, "don't open the lower door, as you did the other day."

"Have you found it out yet?" asked Mrs. Manlius, timidly, when they were by themselves.

"Found what out?"

"Why, what you are trying to find out about that young man."

"I am not trying to find out anything about that

young man," said he, surlily. "You should not talk about such things, Caroline. You only make yourself ridiculous. Hark! I believe that woman is putting on more coal."

"No, she 's sifting some ashes," said Mrs. Manlius, whose ears were better trained to the nice distinctions of household sounds.

"Does she ever go in next door?" asked her husband.

"Mrs. Blake has sent in for both of us," Mrs. Manlius said, "but *we 're* too busy to go out making calls on our neighbors, Mr. Manlius." The pecked hen sometimes turned with a feeble cackle upon her husband. "We 've no time to go gadding about."

"When society calls upon us to do a signal service," said Mr. Manlius, "personal considerations are not to be regarded. I think it would be well if you were to call socially upon Mrs. Blake. Or, no, let Eunice go alone." At this moment Mrs. Starkey came back into the room, before Mrs. Manlius could recover from her astonishment, and her husband frowned her into silence.

"Eunice," he said, "that Mrs. Blake, whom we saw Christmas eve, and who got away that young man from you, had the same name with you, I believe, did n't she? Eunice Brown?"

"It was all an accident," said Mrs. Starkey, in a feeble, tremulous voice. "Nobody meant to do anything. It was all a mistake."

"Oh, I know that, Eunice, I know that. We all know that. What I want to know is, how did you and Mrs. Blake come to have the same name. Is she any relation of yours? Did you ever hear of any other Eunice Brown?"

"I am Eunice Starkey," said she, as if trying to detach herself in some way from herself, as well as from Mrs. Blake.

"Oh, I know that, but you were born Eunice Brown, nay Brown, as they say in France. Why don't you go to see Mrs. Blake? Perhaps you can find out some relationship. Who knows? You tell her where you came from, and ask her where she came from, and perhaps it will turn out that you know each other's folks."

Mrs. Manlius looked with some concern at Mr. Manlius, but he evaded her glance. Mrs. Starkey was talking to herself and pursing her mouth. She began to knit more rapidly, then thrust her needle decisively into her ball, and finally said, —

"Well, I will. I 'll go this minute."

"But, Eunice," said Mrs. Manlius, "it 's too late to-night. Why, it 's after nine o'clock."

"Just put some coal on in half an hour, Caroline," said Mrs. Starkey, as she slapped her knitting on the table, and marched out of the room.

"Dear, dear, Mr. Manlius! How could you?" said his wife in dismay. "Eunice is in one of her talking fits again, and there 's no knowing what she will say. Do stop her."

But Mr. Manlius with all his assumption of magistracy knew very well that it was of no use to try to stop Mrs. Starkey when she had once, so to speak, taken the bit in her mouth, though the simile hardly provides for the incessant flow of talk with which Mrs. Starkey was affected on such occasions, when she passed from a state of timid discouragement to one of excessive volubility. She came down-stairs in a few minutes, dressed and chattering to herself as she came, having evidently thrown her wardrobe upon herself as a sort of accompaniment to her speech.

"I 'm all ready, Mr. Manlius, if you 'll see me to Mrs. Blake's door." Mr. Manlius took his hat and they went to the door. It was snowing hard.

"Dear me," said she, "snowing? snowing! why I did n't know it snowed. Don't believe she 'll be at home. Don't know as I can get back again. Don't see any lights. Do you see any lights, S'prian?"

"No," said he, very emphatically. "The house is as dark as a pocket. They are either away, or gone to bed."

"I might go in and see Miss Pix," said she, feeling under necessity to go somewhere or do something; "or Dr. Chocker. Dr. Chocker must be lonely. I 'll go and see Dr. Chocker. Come, Soprian."

Mr. Manlius faintly hoped there might be some way out of it, but he had had enough experience with this unfortunate woman to know that direct opposition only added fuel to the flame. They made their way to the door of Number One, and rapped upon the door. The knock was answered by black Maria, who peered out at them in undisguised astonishment.

"Did ye want to see my master or Miss Sally?" she asked.

"Want to see Doctor Chocker," spoke up Mrs. Starkey. "Has n't got anybody with him, has he? thought he was all alone?"

"His grandda'ter came to-night," said Maria. "Come in, ye. Don't stand there in the snow."

"Oh we 'd like to see his granddaughter. We 're neighbors, come for a friendly chat. Come along, Soprian." Mr. Manlius walked after her with a frown, tempted to leave his erratic companion in the lurch, but fearful of what excesses she might commit if left wholly to herself. They were ushered into a sitting-room which had plainly been left to its own grim company for an indefinite length of time. Only a light piece of cambric with some stitches of silk in it lying carelessly on the table gave signs of a new occupant.

"I don't know but we 'd better go right up-stairs," said Mrs. Starkey; "won't stand on ceremony, you know," but luckily before she could whirl Mr. Manlius into deeper social waters, the door opened and Dr. Chocker with his ear-trumpet appeared, followed by a girl of nineteen who laid her hand upon his arm and looked with a frank wonder at her guests.

"I am Mr. Manlius," said that gentleman, solemnly. "This is Mrs. Starkey," as if they were figures from some exhibition that had strayed away and needed to point at themselves with a long stick. "Your grandfather knows us," and here he made a kind of dumb show of introducing Mrs. Starkey to Dr. Chocker.

"It is Mrs. Starkey, grandfather," said the girl, "and Mr. Manlius."

"Oh, I know them," said he, waving his ear-trumpet at them, "sit down, sit down. Sally, turn the light up a little. How d' ye do, Mrs. Starkey? How 's that scapegrace of a nephew of yours? abandoned you, did he?" and the old gentleman chuckled over the recollection.

"*He 's* well," said Mrs. Starkey. "Saw him the other day. He 's going to be a great chemist or something. Expect he 's going to blow us all up. I hear him pounding, pounding away. Lives right next to us, you know. Can hear him through the wall. This your granddaughter? Did n't know you had a granddaughter. How d' ye do, Miss Chocker." All but the last sentence she had tumbled into the ear-trumpet which Dr. Chocker had placed under her mouth.

"Yes," said he, putting the trumpet down on his knee, and looking with a queer mixture of pride and curiosity at the young lady, "she 's my granddaughter, Miss Sally Lovering, come to take care of her old grandfather. There 's no mistake about it," he added,

giving his head a confirmatory shake. She 's my granddaughter, and I 'm her grandfather. Don't you go to claiming her." At this Mrs. Starkey was seized with a very voluble fit and poured a succession of words into Dr. Chocker's trumpet, which he received with great good-nature, occasionally interjecting a comment, and every now and then turning to look at his granddaughter, as if to satisfy himself that she was there. Miss Lovering was very certainly there, sitting under the light and working dexterously at the cambric, as if it was the most commonplace matter in the world, to be in this stiff room, entertaining a large, florid man who was an entire stranger to her, and overhearing her grandfather talk with a thin visaged woman whose tongue seemed untied after long restraint.

"You have arrived lately, Miss Lovering, I believe," said Mr. Manlius, lending all the time an ear to the other couple.

"This very evening," said she. "I have made no very long journey, only from Kingston; I have not been here since I was a little girl, yet it all seems very familiar. I do not see that the court has changed at all, nor grandfather's house, but I suppose the same people are not all living here. You were not living here thirteen years ago, were you? I think I should have remembered you, if you had been, for I used to play in the court."

"We have lived in this little place about five years," said Mr. Manlius, "about five years," with an air as if they were only staying here for temporary purposes, being accustomed to much roomier quarters.

"I think it 's the drollest little place," said Miss Lovering. "I remember very well that the last house at the end is in a jog of the court and in the house just before it, there used to live a lovely woman, a Mrs.

Blake who was confined to her room. I remember her perfectly. She was very kind to me."

"She still lives there," said Mr. Manlius, and he began to frown in anticipation of some remark upon Nicholas which he meant to make, when they both heard Mrs. Starkey say in a positive manner, —

"Nicholas Judge is a very remarkable young man. Very few young men like him."

"Why I know a Nicholas Judge," said Miss Lovering to Mr. Manlius. "At least I do not know him myself, though I have seen him. He lived in Kingston with his father until he died."

"Did he come from there last Christmas?" asked Mr. Manlius, pulling his waistcoat down and sitting up straighter.

"Yes, I think it must have been just about Christmas. I remember I have not seen him since then."

"Soprian," said Mrs. Starkey, "we must go. Caroline will be troubled."

"In one moment, Eunice. Did the young man bear a good character, Miss Lovering?" Miss Lovering hesitated.

"I did not know him myself," said she. "Very few people in the village did know him. His father lived by himself, and he never made acquaintances, but his face was not against him."

"A very imperfect means of judging, Miss Lovering, very imperfect," and Mr. Manlius shook his head impressively. "He is living in this court, Miss Lovering," and then sinking his voice to an ominous whisper, "he is living with Mrs. Blake, his reputed aunt."

"Reputed aunt?" questioned Miss Lovering, with undisguised curiosity.

"Come, S'prian," said Mrs. Starkey, decisively. "Glad to see you, Miss Chocker. Come to see us.

We live in Number Three — always at home. Lizzy and Dizzy would like to know you. Mr. Manlius's girls — Mrs. Manlius's girls, twelve and thirteen, — disagreeable age."

"I shall be glad to come," said Miss Lovering, giving her hand to Mrs. Starkey, who marched off with Mr. Manlius behind her.

"Good evening, Dr. Chocker," said Mr. Manlius, lowering the words into the trumpet. "I am glad to see you in such excellent health."

"Um," grunted the Doctor. "Take care of Mrs. Starkey. She 'll be finding another nephew if you don't look out."

"Grandfather," said Miss Lovering, after they were gone, "how social you are. Do your neighbors drop in often in this way? I shall begin to think you did n't need Sally for company."

"Never you mind about our neighbors, Sally," said the old gentleman, shuffling out of the room; "they 're a poor lot, most of 'em; we can get along without them, but we 'll be civil. But what will you do, Sally, here with your old grandfather, eh?"

"Grandfather, if you 'll only let me have a piano here, I shall be perfectly contented; then you 'll let me sit and read in your study, when you 're at work, won't you?" She spoke in coaxing tones, and had such a pretty way of letting her words slip round the corners of her mouth, as it were, that a harder heart than Dr. Chocker's would have melted at once.

"A piano? for me to dance to, I suppose. Well, well, we 'll see about it."

The next morning at breakfast, as Dr. Chocker sat in his tasseled cap, looking every now and then at the bright face under a breakfast-cap that he saw behind the coffee urn, opposite, an unwonted sight indeed, he turned to the servant and asked, —

"Maria, what is the name of that frisky little woman that had a party Christmas eve, here in the court, eh?"

"It was Miss Pix, master."

"That 's it, Miss Pix. Sally, we 'll go over and see Miss Pix after breakfast, and get a piano."

"Why, is there a piano store right here in the court?"

"Almost," said the old gentleman, nodding to her. "We have all sorts of neighbors, Sally. I don't mind your seeing Miss Pix. She 's a frisky little woman. We 'll have to catch her early, I suppose."

Dr. Chocker seemed in great haste to finish his breakfast, and wait upon Miss Pix. The truth was, although the visit, with reference to permanent establishment in his house of Miss Sally Lovering, had come to pass only after a series of letters between him and her aunts, with whom she had of late been living, now that she was here, he was somewhat embarrassed by the new responsibilities that her coming imposed upon him. He had groaned inwardly over the prospect of having a giddy girl invading his quarters, in which he had lived so long in a state of second bachelorhood, but when she came with her bright face and merry, frank manner, he was seized with sudden compunction at the dismal prospect for her, which he seemed suddenly to see. The suggestion of a piano was to him little short of an inspiration. To be sure, Sally could make music all day long. She would practice, he supposed, and the idea of practice to the old gentleman was that of interminably working at the instrument without exhausting its capabilities.

So, breakfast over, Dr. Chocker muffled himself in his wraps, and, taking Sally on his arm, marched over to Miss Pix's. Sally looked curiously at the houses, recalling her childish recollection of them.

"They always seemed like five old ladies to me, grandfather," said she.

"They don't gossip like five old ladies, Sally. Don't you ever grow to be an old lady." Sally laughed. Old age was such a far-off evil!

Miss Pix was at home, and the little parlor which had not yet wholly laid aside its garniture of green seemed to Sally a delightful little place, as they sat waiting for the lady of the house. Piles of music were upon the piano and in racks. Sally looked at the instrument to see the maker's name. Her fingers begged for the keys, and she just touched a chord gently when Miss Pix came in and met her blushing face.

"Ah, you have been shaking hands with my best friend? And you are Dr. Chocker's granddaughter. I am so delighted to see you. He ought to have a granddaughter. I always said so, Dr. Chocker," and she seized his arm that held the trumpet, as if she were pulling his ear. "You have taken ten years off my shoulders. I have really been growing thin with anxiety for you, shut up all alone in that house. I 'm glad you 've opened the shutters and let some sunlight in. I 'm tropical, my dear," she explained to Miss Lovering. "Your grandfather always sets the words flying in my head."

"She 's young, Sally," spoke up the old gentleman, "you may grow as old as she is," and he wagged his trumpet with delight at his impertinence. "Now, Miss Pix, we want some neighborly advice." Miss Pix sat down and smoothed her apron and her face into unexampled wisdom. "My granddaughter here, Sally Lovering, has come to live with me for the present, and you know I don't sing much, so I thought I would get a good stout piano for her to practice on when I was busy and she did n't know what to do with herself. I can hire one, can't I?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Miss Pix. "That's easily done. I'll do it for you, if you'd like to have me. What kind of piano have you been using, Miss Lovering?"

"It is by the same maker as yours," said she.

"Oh, then there'll be no difficulty; not the least in the world. Dr. Chocker, would you like me to help Miss Sally choose an instrument?"

"That's the advice I meant to ask," said the Doctor, drily.

"Let me see," said the little woman, thoughtfully; "I must go to the Bangses at ten, to the Churches at half-past eleven, dinner at one — will you go now, my dear, or wait till one?"

"Oh, let us go now," said Sally; "if grandfather will let me. You are very kind, Miss Pix."

"Oh, not at all, not at all, as people politely say. It's a great secret, but I don't mind telling you. I get a commission when I help people select pianos."

"Oh!" said Miss Lovering, somewhat blankly.

"Not from you, my dear; not for the world from you. I get it from the manufacturer. He charges you just the same. I don't know as I ought to have it this time, because I didn't exactly recommend him to you. What do you think?" and Miss Pix knit her brow and was much exercised in mind. "Let's ask your grandfather."

"But it's nearly ten, Miss Pix, and I am afraid it would take some time to settle the question. Why not get the piano any way, and then you can settle about the commission afterward."

"Well," said Miss Pix, jumping up, glad of some reprieve, "that's true; you must have your piano, any way. I'm so glad you like music. I am very fond of it; but, dear me, my pupils take up pretty much all my time."

Dr. Chocker left the ladies and went back to his books, somewhat disposed to be querulous over the slice of a half hour out of his morning work, but the recollection of his granddaughter's bright face partially did for him what her presence was sure to do — restored him to good-nature. "I suppose I 'm getting old," he muttered to himself, as he left the house, "and can't be left alone. Well, I 'd rather be left in Sally's hands than in some other people's." Perhaps he was spiritually cognizant of his neighbor Manlius, who just then opened the door of his house and came forth, traveling-bag in hand, while the door-way was filled by Mrs. Manlius, looking very heated, Mrs. Starkey, rather wobegone, and Lizzy and Dizzy, the latter jumping up and down to get a sight of her retreating father.

"Good-morning, Dr. Chocker," said Mr. Manlius; "I hope you find yourself well this morning. You are taking the cool morning air, I presume."

"Yes," said the Doctor; "I take it as it comes. It happens to be cool this February morning. Going out of town?"

"Some business, partly of a public, partly of a private nature, takes me into the country to-day," said Mr. Manlius, with dignity. "I shall very likely communicate with you, on my return, respecting it;" and he looked at the old gentleman with a most solemn face.

"Heard of the death of a dear friend?" asked Dr. Chocker, sharply.

"It may be, it may be," said Mr. Manlius, mysteriously. "But I must be in season for my train. Good-morning."

"Pumpkin head!" said the Doctor, more vigorously than politely, as he swung his ear-trumpet, and walked with quick, short steps to his house.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Manlius had profited by his information accidentally obtained the night before, and resolving to use a masterly activity, had set out for Kingston, to inform himself, by personal inquiry into the antecedents of Nicholas Judge. He was doubtful of the expediency of examining Miss Lovering minutely; at any rate, whatever she could tell him would better be confirmatory of his own knowledge obtained from other sources; and there even lay, in the darker background of his mind, a possible *coup de theatre*, in which Miss Lovering might be an important actor if now left to herself. Kingston was only two or three hours distant, and he expected to be home again in the evening, but he had taken his bag, partly as a precaution against any possible detention, but more from the moral support which it gave him. A man traveling without a bag lacks the credentials of a traveler. Mr. Manlius had his notebook also with him, and studied it attentively in the train, now and then jotting down some brief memorandum, adding thus to the impressiveness which his figure and air could not fail to produce. He had never been in Kingston, but knew it as a country village, placed high, in a farming country, at the foot of a so-called mountain. Round Top was a fair result of nature's exertions in the immediate neighborhood, and since it was detached from any group or chain of hills, there was more reason for giving it the title of

mountain, though it had no ravines or deep scorings on its face. One side was partly cultivated, partly pasture land; the other a tangle of wood, with deep moss and fallen tree trunks, damp and cold. A path led to the top, beginning as a broad wood road, but gradually becoming languid, and contenting itself with the easier and less ambitious career of a footpath, allowing itself to be overgrown, and the lodging place of such loose stones as rolled down the side of the hill.

Mr. Manlius, on reaching the station at Kingston, found a venerable carryall which professed to run from the depot to the village, but though the driver, Silas King, whipped his horse with a monotonous regularity all the way, and had whipped him in the same way for several years on his twice-a-day excursion, he had not yet succeeded in producing what could honestly be called a run. The principal feature of the carryall that had predestined it for a carriage to go to the depot, was a pair or several pairs rather, of unfolding steps that gave the vehicle a highly professional look. When Silas had opened the door and developed the narrow staircase that had been folded against it, and had assisted a passenger to walk up the staircase by the easy gradation to the height of some two feet, and had slammed the door and folded up the steps with an ostentatious clatter, the ceremony seemed to invest the vehicle with an importance that even lent dignity to the railway itself.

This time Silas was especially consequential, for the size of Mr. Manlius and his evident weight of character, could certainly belong to no common person, and Silas at once set him down as a capitalist. A capitalist was a person whom Silas had long been looking for with great expectation. Ever since the railway had been opened, indeed ever since it had first been projected, he had

heard of the vast change it would make in the value of property in Kingston. People had said that capitalists would come and buy land and establish a great hotel, or start a factory, or perform some magical touch which only capitalists can perform, and Silas had taken up the occupation of running a stage to the depot with the secret purpose of getting the first chance with any capitalist who might come from the city. He himself had a piece of property, a few acres on the side of Round Top, and though he never had been able to do much with it, he was not a capitalist, and if he could catch one of those men, he was confident that his fortune would be made. So he presented himself with his carriage, as a kind of testimonial to his importance as a landed proprietor, and watched daily for the capitalist.

The snow lay on the ground, but it had not been a heavy fall, and as the roads were otherwise pretty hard, the carryall could thump along at its usual rate. Silas waited a few minutes for any other passenger whom he might have overlooked, and then settled himself in his seat for a comfortable chat with his passenger, keeping an eye out for business.

"Business good down in the city?"

"Fair," said Mr. Manlius, who was about as intimately acquainted with the business of the city as Silas himself. "Fair. We're are hoping for better times."

"Ah," said Silas. "Well, now up here in Kingston, folks say we're going to have a lively summer," which certainly showed great foreknowledge on somebody's part, it being now February.

"So," said Mr. Manlius, "likely to have good crops?" Silas looked at him a moment curiously.

"Farming's about played out here," said he, "but if you'd like to try it, I know just about the nicest farm for sale, within ten miles, just about the nicest."

"No," said Mr. Manlius, reflectively. "I am not disposed to buy for farming purposes just now; I 'm more interested in people;" and he smiled a superior smile.

"Eh," said Silas. "Do you know a fine view when you see it? a view that takes in forty miles at a stretch? Now, I know a piece of ground for a hotel that ain't to be matched, not this side of the city. You can see the dome of the State House on a clear day. Folks have said they can see it by moonlight, but I never did," he added with candor. "Right on the side of Round Top, a good spring on the premises, fust rate road to the top, wants a little sprucing up, that 's all."

"Good water privilege?" asked Mr. Manlius, in a general way.

"Water privilege! why, it 's my opinion that the brook that runs right through my place never had a fair chance yet. Just drain it up in the meadow back of my lot, let it lie round there, and then turn it on, and you 'd have such a water power as would make the fortune of any factory in the country."

"But could you get operatives enough about here to run it?" asked Mr. Manlius, edging up to his own interests.

"Operatives? why you could find girls right about here on the farms that would fill your factory right up. Operatives!"

"Well now, my friend," said Mr. Manlius, "don't you suppose the girls here on the farms would rather go to the city, and earn their living there, and have comfortable homes and social privilege? Why they can earn nearly twenty-five per cent. more, though it does n't look like it at first."

"Earn their living, how?"

"Why, by living out as cooks, chamber-maids, nursery girls, and so forth."

"No sirree. Our girls don't want any of that kind of life, but give 'em a factory here, and they'll flock into it."

"I've had a good deal of experience in this matter, sir," said Mr. Manlius, "and I can tell you that girls are ten times better off who go into families than those who go to work in factories. Now, take your people round here, don't you know some family, where there's one girl too many? and hasn't she got some friend? now if those two girls were to go to the city and get places, they'd see each other, just about the same as at home, and have a first-rate time besides."

"Well," said Silas, "none of our girls that I ever heard on, went to live out in the city, and they might like to go, if there was fun in it. Girls are mighty glad to have a good time."

"I suppose your minister would know if there were any such."

"Are you looking out for a girl?" asked Silas, turning full upon him. "Why I thought you was a capitalist."

"Something so, something so," said Mr. Manlius slowly. "I am a contractor, so to speak. Let me see, what is your minister's name?"

"There's more'n one minister in town, I should hope," said Silas; "my minister is Mr. Lovering."

"Ah, that's the gentleman I want to see," said Mr. Manlius. "Just drive me to his house will you. I have some little business with him. By the bye, did you ever have a young man in town here named Nicholas Judge?"

"Nicholas Judge!" said Silas, turning square round upon his questioner. "Do I know Nicholas Judge? Yes, I do, and I knew Simon Judge, too; was he any relation of yourn?"

"No, sir," said Mr. Manlius, with emphasis; "he was not. What can you tell me about this Simon Judge."

"I don't want to tell you much about *him*. He poisoned my sister."

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Manlius. "I don't wish to recall painful recollections, young man, but what you say strangely affects me. Let me see, what did you say your name was?"

"I don't know as I said," said he, "but I've no objection to telling my name. It's Silas King. I live up there on the side of Round Top. You can see the clearing, along by that row of maples. I don't want to talk now about Dr. Simon Judge. He's dead and gone, and that's the end of *him*, if it ain't of the rest of us. Here's Mr. Lovering's." They stopped in front of the modest parsonage, and Mr. Manlius alighted from the venerable carryall.

"Going back this afternoon?" asked Silas, as he took his fare.

"Yes, I expect to return by the train that leaves at 3.30. You will start from the hotel, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, I shall, at three o'clock. My carriage runs regular."

"Well, I shall want to go down with you," said Mr. Manlius. "I want to see *you*, Silas."

The Rev. Mr. Lovering had seen the depot carriage stop, as he looked out of his study window, and seeing Mr. Manlius with his bag, was trying to determine in his own mind whether he was to have a call from a book agent or the agent for some benevolent society. He was tolerably well acquainted with the regular members of the latter fraternity, and besides it was not Saturday, so that he had resigned himself to the belief that he was to be asked to examine some book which

it was to be his solemn duty to recommend to his parishioners. He was an elderly man and had long ago given over the attempt to exclude these merchants from his house, but listened patiently and then tried, as he said, to do them a little good, taking for a text some passage in the book before him. In this way he had, to his surprise, sometimes flanked his adversary and been left to himself suddenly. On such occasions he trusted that his bow drawn at a venture had sent its arrow home to the conscience.

Mr. Manlius was ushered into the study, bearing his bag, which he placed by his side as he took his seat.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lovering," said he. "I hope I find you quite well? My name is Manlius. I am somewhat of a stranger in your village, but I believe I have the honor of a slight acquaintance with your daughter, or granddaughter, and her esteemed grandfather, the learned Dr. Chocker." Mr. Lovering looked a little puzzled.

"I fear you are misinformed," he replied, taking off his glasses and slowly rubbing them. "I am, it is true, somewhat advanced in years, and have had time to have even a granddaughter, but I have not taken the necessary steps, as I think. I have never yet been married."

"Oh, ah," said Mr. Manlius, somewhat disconcerted. "Dr. Chocker is a neighbor of mine, and I have lately met at his house a Miss Sally Lovering, who purports to have come from Kingston," and he began to think the innocent village a nest of impostors.

"Very likely, very likely," said Mr. Lovering, "there is a family of two maiden ladies of my name living here, who had a young niece, I believe. They were no connection of mine, and were indeed attendants at the Episcopal church, — very excellent ladies, though, I am informed. Miss Lovering did not send you to me?"

"Not directly," said Mr. Manlius, who was loth to abandon the social claim which he supposed he should quickly establish. "I came to Kingston on a matter of business, and I naturally came first to one whom I supposed to be related to my young friend;" and Mr. Manlius eyed the minister sharply, to see whether he were not, even now, playing some game with him.

"Ah," said Mr. Lovering, who always waited patiently the first attack of book-agents, and sat now slowly rubbing his spectacles and smiling absently.

"My errand is of a double character, sir," continued Mr. Manlius. "I am engaged in the occupation of providing homes for young country girls who come to the city, and have thought it every way proper to come first to you as a minister of the gospel, to explain my errand in town."

"Ah!" said Mr. Lovering, putting on his glasses and looking straight at the man.

"Yes, sir. I have long been of the conviction that more systematic provision should be made for the needs of young women who leave their country homes, *and* for those families in the city that stand in need of, — of assistance in the care of the household." The case was so delicately put that Mr. Lovering did not at first see the exact bearing of it.

"Do I understand that you are in the employ of some benevolent society?"

"I am in the interests of society at large," said Mr. Manlius, with dignity. "Every country girl who brings the simplicity of country life to our city firesides, and every city family that gives shelter and a home to the innocent country girl are engaged with me in this important work."

"Ah, and you want to provide homes for homeless girls?"

"Here is my card, sir," said Mr. Manlius, feeling it necessary to come to the point with this dull man, and handing him one of his business cards.

"Oh," said Mr. Lovering, light now dawning upon him, "so you find situations for girls, do you? I have heard of such persons, but I never saw one before," and he looked curiously at his visitor. "But we are not in need of any servants."

"I presume not," said Mr. Manlius, "I presume not, but I presume, also, that as a minister of the gospel in this town, you have an interest in the welfare of your flock, and would regard it as an unspeakable evil to have any of the young girls who go from here to the city fall into bad hands? My mission is to prevent that. I have here, sir," tapping his note-book, "certain statistics which prove conclusively that a girl taking a situation, say as second girl, will in five years lay up as much money as one who has been working, say in a cotton factory, for seven years, and will be a far more useful member of society. Sir, why should we go to Prince Edward's Island and Nova Scotia for our domestics? I know those places, sir. My paid agent, Mr. Sope, has scoured them thoroughly. Why should we wait for the down-trodden foreigner to come to our shores, when we have here in our midst, in our midst, reverend sir, those who might be members of our households. The complaint is that young men leave the country for the city. Sir, I say let their sisters leave also, and the social problem will be solved." Mr. Manlius paused. Mr. Lovering looked at him still with his absent smile. "What I ask of you, sir," continued the speaker, "is to put me in the way of seeing likely young women, farmers' daughters and others, of your parish. I shall enter their names on my book as candidates: then when I am asked for a cook, or a

nursery-maid, or a second girl, or a girl to do general housework, and one from the country is preferred, I shall be ready to provide at once suitable persons, *and* procure comfortable homes for the same." Mr. Manlius spoke briskly as he got upon the business details of his plan. Mr. Lovering took off his glasses, and rubbed his eyes a little, then rubbed his additional eyes sympathetically.

"Yes," he said, presently; "you want me to put you in the way of going about in my parish for this purpose. We cannot be too careful about our associations. These young girls, when they go to the city, are, as you say, exposed to risks. I have not been to the city myself for a great many years. I find that many go, with apparently no good reason. Have you a family, Mr. Manlius?"

"Yes, sir, I have two children, girls."

"Ah, girls! And you are bringing them up to be house servants?"

"No, sir; I expect to have my girls honor the station in which they were born!" said Mr. Manlius, severely.

"Ah, yes. Well, I have no daughters, as I told you. If I had, possibly I might be willing to have them go. A servant's place in the city is, no doubt, very honorable; but I greatly fear that there are none of the young girls in my parish whom I could recommend just now to go to the city as servants. Still there may be some who wish to go, but not just now, not at present." Mr. Lovering moved uneasily about in his chair. The visitor gave him more concern than an ordinary book agent, since an indorsement of a man seemed so much more serious than the indorsement of a book. It would be a relief if he only would have some such

business. Suddenly he recollected that Mr. Manlius had spoken of two errands.

"You spoke of two errands," said he. "Perhaps I can be of some assistance to you in the other matter?"

"Do you happen to know," asked Mr. Manlius, in a careless manner, "of one Nicholas Judge, a young man formerly a resident of this town, and of his father, one Dr. Simon Judge, since deceased, I believe?"

"I knew them both," said Mr. Lovering, glad to escape from his more unpleasant subject. "That is to say, I knew young Judge slightly, and I cannot say that I knew his father intimately. He was quite a recluse in his habits."

"Was n't there some story or other against the doctor?" asked Mr. Manlius, taking out his note-book, and holding it idly.

"There was an unfortunate circumstance connected with Dr. Judge. He was not, as you probably know, a practicing physician; but lived quite by himself, experimenting with drugs and minerals. No one knew precisely what he expected to discover. The country people had, of course, strange stories about his occupation. I myself gave little credence to them. But one day a neighbor's daughter, who was wont to play thereabout, was found dead."

"Ah, the King girl, I suppose," said Mr. Manlius, knowingly.

"Oh, you know the story, then?"

"Something, something; but I should be glad to hear your version."

"I have no prejudice in the matter," said the mild minister. "There was great excitement in the country about here; and some claimed that Dr. Judge had been experimenting upon the girl with some poisonous substance. His own story was that the girl, in his

absence, partook of some jelly-like matter which contained poisonous ingredients, and died almost immediately from the effects of it. Indeed, the coroner's jury so found, and no action was ever brought against the doctor. But he shut himself up more than ever after that, and refused to see any one in his house, though he occasionally came to mine and to one or two others. When he died, his body was carried to the church, he worshiped at the Episcopal church, and was buried from there. His son I saw occasionally. He seemed to be an excellent young man, but during the last few years of his father's life was a constant attendant upon him, and seemed to have little to do with the other young people of the village. He left the place suddenly, a few weeks since, and I was told that he had gone to the city."

"Yes, he is a neighbor of mine," said Mr. Manlius, closing his note-book, in which he had made an entry now and then. "I have a somewhat capricious memory, sir, and wished to jot down one or two business matters while you were speaking; but I was quite attentive, sir, and very much interested." He rose to take leave, and lifting his black bag, gave his hand to Mr. Lovering.

"Allow me to leave a few of my cards with you, sir," he said, presenting him with a supply likely to last some time; "if you find that any young woman in your parish desires to go to the city, you can give her one of these; write your name on it, and I shall take special interest in her." Mr. Lovering bowed him out of the house, relieved at getting rid of him, but much exercised in his own mind over the errands of his visitor, and suddenly remembering that he had not asked what special reason Mr. Manlius had for inquiring about the Judges.

Mr. Manlius, on his side, felt that he had made some progress. It was difficult to say which part of his business was uppermost in his mind. He had combined the two, in a prudential spirit, and he proposed to continue his plan, by calling, in an unaffected way at such houses as seemed most likely to answer his purpose. He found no difficulty in inducing people to discuss the affairs of Dr. Judge and his son, and met with a varying opinion upon the character of the father. He was subjected in turn to some inquisitiveness of the people, but parried the questions that were put with more or less success. He found, however, that there was a somewhat stubborn prejudice against the notion of domestic service on the part of the girls whom he met. In vain he showed his statistics and held out luring bait, painting the picture of social life in town in high colors. He met with no more encouragement than could be predicted from the willingness of the several families to receive and post conspicuously his card. Not that the young women whom he encountered were unwilling to go to the city. Had he offered them situations of drudgery in stores, he could have gone back with a battalion, but not even the prospect of fun, upon which, however, Mr. Manlius's ideas were rather vague, could stir them from their prejudice against the notion of working as servants.

At three o'clock Mr. Manlius was at the village hotel, having privately partaken on the way thither of a lunch discovered in his traveling bag, and found Silas King with his venerable carriage ready to take him back to the station. Mr. Manlius placed a few of his cards in the hands of the hotel-keeper for judicious distribution, and took the precaution to borrow a tack-hammer and tacks, and nail one up in the bar, writing beneath it: "All persons desiring employment in

respectable families in the city should apply to Mr. M." Silas read the card with attention, and looked at Mr. Manlius, who had so far shrunk now in mental proportions that he deemed it hardly necessary to help him up the folding staircase of his carriage, but let him clamber up as best he might, calling after him, "Easy there, sir! Don't bear all your weight on them steps." Then, Mr. Manlius being well within, Silas carelessly folded the staircase and took his place to drive.

"You're very punctual, I see, Mr. King," said Mr. Manlius, presently. "You never got there too late, I suppose. I should be very sorry to miss the train myself." Silas was whipping his horse methodically.

"Yes," he drawled. "Time's of consequence to you and me. The train always gets in after my carriage. Did you find any girls?"

"I saw a number of young women, but they were not prepared to accept my proposition at once."

"Likely not," said Silas. "Our girls know a thing or two."

"About your sister now," said Mr. Manlius, turning the subject. "It's a painful subject, I am aware, but there are important reasons why I should know something further of the Judges, father and son. The son, now, should you say he took after his father?"

"I say, are you a Justice of the Peace?" asked Silas.

"I am," said Mr. Manlius. "I was appointed by the late Governor."

"Then I won't say anything about the old Judge and his son to you, not a word," he added, vehemently, whipping his horse so hard as to make even him wince.

"But you told me that Dr. Judge poisoned your sister," said Mr. Manlius, mildly.

"No, I did n't," said Silas. "There wa'n't any wit-

ness when I said that. I tell ye, you don't get another word out of me. I 'll talk about the crops or anything else, but I won't talk about that," said Silas, excitedly. Mr. Manlius was puzzled, for in his researches he had not heard of the examination of Silas by the coroner, when, mainly on his representations, Dr. Judge had rested under suspicion, and of the dire confusion and contradiction into which he had been thrown. "You may hang the son if you want to," he went on, "but you won't hang him on my testimony;" and thereafter he maintained an obstinate silence until they reached the station.

"If you ever come to town, come and see me," said Mr. Manlius, handing him a card.

"Much obliged," said Silas, shortly, looking the other way, "but I don't never go to town."

Mr. Manlius went first to his office on reaching town; he was so seldom absent from it that he was disappointed to hear that nothing serious had happened in his absence. He went home and found Mrs. Manlius awaiting him anxiously. She had only known in a general way where he had been, and what his errand was. He had so veiled it all in mystery as almost to deceive himself, and now he did nothing to lessen the anxiety which his wife bore. He sat in the evening with paper, and pen, and note-book before him, sometimes holding his heavy head on his hand as if the weight of its contents was too much for his spine. So matters continued for a day or two. Lizzy and Dizzy could not fail to notice their father's preoccupation.

"Pop 's got a secret," was Dizzy's way of putting it. "I mean to find out what it is."

"It 's something very important, Dizzy," said her sister, with an air of being her father's confidante. "You must n't disturb him."

"Now, Liz Manlius, you need n't put on airs," said Dizzy. "You know no more about it than Eunice does."

"Yes, I do. It's something about Nicholas Judge."

"Oh, is it! Nicholas is divine. How near he came to being Eunice's nephew. What if he'd lived right in this house, Lizzy!"

"He would have been of great help to me in my studies," said that young lady, demurely.

"You goose. Pop does n't like him any way. I think it 's horrid. He bowed to me this morning when I met him. Yes, I don't mind telling you, Liz. He took his hat off."

"I don't believe he knows you from me, Diz Manlius, — at a distance."

"Oho! Liz is jealous! Liz is jealous!" and her mercurial sister spun round several times, in her delight, and finally staggered into Lizzy's arms, who impatiently pushed her away.

CHAPTER VII.

MEANWHILE Mr. Manlius kept his own counsel, though his general temper leaked out now and then. It was drawing toward the close of the month, and there was every appearance of a gathering of ideas, so to speak, in Mr. Manlius's head, which fairly buzzed with excitement.

"Caroline," he said, at length, one Monday. "To-morrow is Washington's birthday."

"Yes," said she, trembling.

"I propose to celebrate the day, and to ask my neighbors to celebrate it, by a surprise party."

"Oh, Soprian! really?"

"I do not mean a mere frivolous surprise; but I propose that we shall all go and pay our respects to our neighbor, Mrs. Blake."

"Shall you ask Dr. Chocker?" asked his wife, who stood much in awe of him.

"Certainly, I shall ask Dr. Chocker and his granddaughter."

"But Nicholas Judge will be there," said Mrs. Manlius, faintly, and uneasily.

"Unquestionably, unquestionably," said Mr. Manlius, with a stern look. "That is reasonably to be expected. I propose to go this evening, and invite my neighbors." If it had been a funeral to which he intended asking them, he could hardly have spoken with more depressing effect.

"I suppose Eunice had better stay at home," said Mrs. Manlius.

"Yes, decidedly. She must stay at home with the children," said Mr. Manlius, with a frown. "Don't let her know about it."

"Mrs. Blake has been very kind to her," said his wife. "Eunice has been in to see her once or twice since you spoke about it."

"She has, eh?" said Mr. Manlius, sharply. "Why did n't you tell me?"

"You were so engaged, Soprian; I did n't like to disturb you. I 'll tell her not to go so often, if you think best."

"Let her alone, Caroline; she 'll only go the more for that."

When the evening came, Mr. Manlius, as he had planned, set out directly after tea.

"Pop 's gone out on his secret," said Dizzy, confidentially. "Eunice, what is Pop's secret?" Mrs. Manlius was out of the room.

"Hush, child. I don't know. He 's a very busy man."

"It 's something about your nephew, Liz says," said Dizzy.

"He 's a good young man," said Eunice, with a sigh.

"Don't you wish he had stayed your nephew, Eunice?" asked the girl.

"It don't much matter," said she, sighing again. "Something else would have happened." In poor Eunice Starkey's world, the somethings that happened were never very bright or desirable things; or if they were, they seemed to fade as quickly as a sunset. Mrs. Manlius returning to the room looked the full extent of her own account of herself — worried to

death. She snapped at Dizzy, and snapped at Eunice Starkey.

"It 's all along of that pretended nephew of yours," she said to the latter. "Why could n't he stay away, and not come here bothering us. I 'm sure I don't know what will happen to Mr. Manlius. He 's gone out now, and we 've got to go out to-morrow night, — Dizzy, you go straight to bed."

"Where are you going to-morrow night?" asked the inquisitive girl.

"I 'm going to get some layer-overs for meddlers," said her mother, vexed at having half betrayed herself; and when Dizzy was gone, she eyed the thin woman beside her sharply, to see if she had taken any special notice of what had been said; but Eunice made no sign of surprise or curiosity.

"What sort of a woman is Mrs. Blake?" pursued Mrs. Manlius.

"She 's a very kind lady," said Eunice, knitting assiduously.

"Does she ever ask you questions about us?"

"No. She does n't seem to be an inquisitive sort of person."

"I 'm sure," sighed Mrs. Manlius. "I most wish I was tied to my chamber, and could n't run about. I don't know but I should grow into a saint that way," and she stared ruefully.

"Mrs. Blake 's seen a heap of trouble," said her companion. "She never told me much, but I can see it."

"She an't afraid of her nephew, is she?" asked Mrs. Manlius, looking askance.

"Afraid of her nephew? why no, why should she be?"

"Does n't do to trust to appearances," said Mrs. Man-

lius, grimly, catching a faint echo of her husband's sententious and oracular way. "I won't say any more, but just you keep an eye on Nicholas Judge."

Mrs. Starkey's countenance fell. It seemed to her as if another of the few props that held her up, had been roughly shaken.

"Oh, I hope not," she said sorrowfully. "I think I'd better look at the furnace fire," — a way of escape from further possible disclosures, which was not without its relief to Mrs. Manlius, who began to fear she had gone too far, and that she might be questioned uncomfortably in turn.

"You 'll want to sift some of those ashes, Eunice," she said. "Mr. Manlius don't like to find too few cinders when he covers up the fire."

Mr. Manlius, at this time was calling on his neighbors, serving notice of the surprise party to come off the next evening. Being of a frugal mind he had decided against the neighbors carrying anything besides their own selves with them with which to entertain Mrs. Blake. He had made his first call at Dr. Chocker's. Miss Lovering received him, and at his request, sent for her grandfather, who came in somewhat testily, having been interrupted when on a troublesome chase after a word, which he remembered having once met somewhere in Eustathius, and the worthy bishop had a chance to hide a good many words in his magpie collection of comments.

"Well, neighbor," said Dr. Chocker, giving Mr. Manlius his little hand. "So you 've got back from the funeral, have you?"

"It was not a funeral," said Mr. Manlius slowly, in the old gentleman's trumpet. "It was business. I was hunting a rogue."

"Need n't have gone out of town for that," said Dr. Chocker. "I 'd engage to find one in this court."

"You may well say that," said Mr. Manlius with a sort of freemasonry in his eye. "But I 've come on a little different errand, — a little different. I want you and your granddaughter to join the neighbors in a friendly irruption, if I may say so, a festive descent on our infirm neighbor, Mrs. Blake."

"Don't understand," said he, sharply. "Here, you tell my granddaughter what you want; she 'll translate it to me. Excuse me. I 'm very busy. I 'm hunting a rogue, too; a rogue a bishop has concealed," he added as he turned on his heel.

"Grandfather 's very busy to-night," explained Miss Lovering. "Pray, what is your plan, Mr. Manlius? a surprise party?"

"In a measure, in a measure. We don't propose to carry anything, Miss Lovering. I think that will hardly be necessary. But to-morrow is Washington's birthday, and I thought we might properly pay our respects to a person situated as Mrs. Blake is. She can hardly enter much into ordinary festivities."

"Oh, we shall be delighted to go," said Miss Lovering. "I admire Mrs. Blake extremely, and I think it will be very pleasant for her to see her neighbors thus."

"At eight, then," said Mr. Manlius, rising, and then, turning to Miss Lovering, he said impressively, "I went to Kingston, the other day."

"Did you, indeed?" said she, and catching something in his face, she began to wonder what she had to do with that.

"I did not see your relations," he said, but I saw a distant connection of yours, I believe, the Reverend Mr. Lovering." Miss Lovering looked puzzled, especially as she saw that Mr. Manlius was eying her intently. She began to think she was unwittingly mixed

up in some mysterious manner with Mr. Manlius and his fortunes. He seemed to have no further disclosures to make, however, and went out, leaving her to laugh over the solemn manner he had borne, and her own undisguised and, as she thought it, rather open-mouthed surprise.

Mr. Manlius's next call was upon Mr. Paul Le Clear, whom he had occasionally seen since Christmas, but only for an exchange of bows. He found the young gentleman, arrayed in a long wrapper, and topped with a tasseled cap which gave him the look of belonging to some order or brotherhood, not the Barefooted Friars certainly, but perhaps the Slippered Toasters, as he had an ingenious instrument by him, which he had constructed, upon which he was toasting some Chater's muffins. A number of Tait's magazine was in his hand, and he was browsing pleasantly in literary pastures.

"Mr. Manlius, sir," said that gentleman, introducing himself, as Mr. Le Clear seemed for a moment a little surprised at his entrance.

"Oh, to be sure. Sit down, Mr. Manlius. I have not had this pleasure since Christmas. That was quite a little anecdote of the times, eh? How is that young nephew in general to Five-Sisters Court?" and he moved his muffin a little farther back.

"I believe he is well. He is well to-day," said Mr. Manlius with a somewhat mysterious emphasis. "I have come to ask you to join us, Mr. Le Clear, in a slight — adventure I think I may call it. We propose to celebrate to-morrow evening by an impromptu call upon our neighbor, Mrs. Blake."

"Ah?"

"We should be happy to have you join us in our — our mutual arrangement. It will be quite informal. We do not propose to carry anything."

"Carry anything?"

"Anything to eat, I mean. We shall carry ourselves, and the compliments of the day," said Mr. Manlius, with ponderous facetiousness.

"The day?"

"Washington's birthday, you know."

"Ah! You propose that we shall go and make a general descent upon the infirm lady in Number Four?"

"That was my idea — a surprise party, I think it is sometimes called."

"Very entertaining, no doubt," said Mr. Le Clear, languidly, "but while Washington was no doubt a model man, and Mrs. Blake an estimable gentlewoman, I hardly think I feel equal to surprising either of them. In fact surprises bore me."

"Then you have no desire to be surprised yourself?" asked Mr. Manlius with a frown.

"Not by a party." Mr. Manlius was perplexed, and sat frowning moodily.

"I have no objection to saying," he at length said, "that I have a further object in mind. I desire to bring together the same persons who were privy to a certain scene last Christmas, with a view to making certain public statements with regard to a certain person who was then and there present."

"Are you certain about it?" asked Mr. Le Clear.

"Yes, sir; yes, sir," said Mr. Manlius; "and I have reason to believe that I shall be supported by the learned Dr. Chocker and by his granddaughter, Miss Lovering, who, you may be aware, has lately come to reside with her grandfather."

"Oh, her name's Miss Lovering, is it? and she 's old Chocker's granddaughter? Hm. What time do you want us at the funeral services of our young friend,

Mr. Manlius?" Mr. Manlius leered at the words and tone.

"At eight o'clock, Mr. Le Clear."

"Well, I may drop in, but don't wait for me. You 've had your tea, I suppose?"

"Yes, I see I am detaining you. Good evening, sir," and Mr. Manlius left, but put his head in at the door again, to say, "Mr. Le Clear, I have reasons for wishing to reserve my — my ulterior object. You will regard my communication as strictly confidential?"

"Oh, entirely so," said Mr. Le Clear. "I'll forget it altogether, if you desire it." Mr. Manlius had but one other call to make, and that was on Miss Pix. He found her having a social evening with Mr. Windgraff and Mr. Pfeiffer, who had left their instruments at home, contrary to Mr. Manlius's general notions with regard to foreigners, and were chatting with Miss Pix without the least awkwardness, the mere fact of their not having violins with them not seeming to impede their action. Mr. Manlius, like some smaller men, found it difficult to conceive of these professional musicians without embracing their instruments also, so much like additional members do they seem to the unversed.

"Mr. Manlius, you have not forgotten Mr. Windgraff, I presume," said their hostess, "nor Mr. Pfeiffer," as the visitor came into the little parlor and was greeted by her. "What an odd evening that was at Christmas. We often speak of it."

"It was a surprise symphony," said Mr. Windgraff, enunciating the words slowly.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Pfeiffer, who had fewer English words at his immediate command, and indeed kept most of his linguistic capital in the bank, so to speak, of a pocket dictionary, drawing from it only as he had need, — a convenient kind of bank which he carried

in a private pocket made for it in each of his coats by the industrious Mrs. Pfeiffer.

"So it was," said Miss Pix, with animation, while Mr. Pfeiffer took out his little dictionary and looked up the word *surprise*.

"*Symphonie mit Paukenschlag*," explained Mr. Windgraff, in an aside to his friend.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, and his face broadened into a smile of interest, which increased as he found *surprise*, and nodded intelligently.

"It was very unexpected," said Mr. Manlius, looking at the ceiling, "so are other things, other things;" and he looked at Miss Pix, who returned his gaze with a certain severity which quite became her, though it was only a general expression of her disposition toward Mr. Manlius.

"I called," he went on to say, "to propose a companion piece, if I may say so, for to-morrow evening. Washington's birthday, you are aware, Miss Pix."

"Washington's birthday!" exclaimed Mr. Pfeiffer, who knew both words without looking them out. "Yes! to-morrow!" for his children were to have a holiday, and he had been laboriously reading about Washington in one of their school-books.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Manlius, turning to him. "You are right. We celebrate in our country the annual return of the anniversary of the birth of the Father of his Country. We have no saint's days or idle festivities generally in our country. Fourth of July and Washington's birthday are our principal days; they remind us of our country's greatness;" and Mr. Manlius leaned back and half closed his eyes, as if the light of his country's fame was almost too much for him. Mr. Pfeiffer listened eagerly, and began consulting his dictionary, anxious to add to his stock of knowledge;

but when Mr. Windgraff quietly interpreted the sentence, he looked a trifle disappointed, — he knew all that before.

"What do you propose for to-morrow evening?" asked Miss Pix, a little impatiently.

"I propose a surprise party from the court, to meet at Mrs. Blake's." Miss Pix opened her eyes in astonishment.

"You good man!" said she, impulsively getting up and shaking Mr. Manlius's hand, somewhat to that gentleman's surprise, and giving herself a little internal admonitory shaking, as it were, for want of charity toward her neighbor. "That is a charming idea. What shall we carry?"

"A piece of Washington pie," suggested Mr. Windgraff, who had that day made the acquaintance of this patriotic pastry.

"Mr. Windgraff, you are a genius," said Miss Pix, in delight. "But really, Mr. Manlius, what do you propose?"

"I have talked the matter over with Mrs. Manlius, and Miss Lovering, and Mr. Paul Le Clear," said he, generously sharing his private sentiments with them, "and it is unanimously agreed that we should not undertake to make any donation to Mrs. Blake."

"Not take anything?" said Miss Pix. "Why, that seems rather unneighborly. Of course she does n't need anything, and I did n't mean donations; but she may not have on hand anything for us. And then anything goes off so much better if you have eating and drinking, does n't it, Mr. Pfeiffer?"

"What?" he asked, and as she explained in German he replied with great emphasis, and recommended potato salad.

"But we ought to agree about it, Mr. Manlius," said

Miss Pix, "and if the rest of you think it best not to, I'll give in," and then, somewhat embarrassed and making various private unintelligible signs to Mr. Manlius, she finally asked in a confidential whisper, hoping Mr. Manlius understood Latin, and wishing to put it succinctly, "Mei quatuor amici musici?" Mr. Manlius stared. "Duo hic, duo illic," she explained, desperately. Mr. Manlius pulled his waistcoat down and sat up straighter. He knew *duo*, but that threw no light on the rest. "That sounds like my daughter Elizabeth," said he. "She says things like that. She 's studying Latin."

"Oh, is she?" said Miss Pix; "do let me show you a Latin book I have over here," and she marched him across the room and then whispered eagerly, "May n't I ask these two gentlemen and the other two? You know they were all here that evening?" Mr. Manlius reflected. It certainly would help to make the gathering more impressive, but he began to feel a sudden faint misgiving, as it flashed across his mind that he might have to give a clear and lucid explanation to these German musicians, and that they would hardly meet him half way, as the others would.

"Well, I suppose we might," he said, after a pause, "but the room is pretty small."

"Oh, we can scatter about, and we can come in here afterward and have some music," said Miss Pix, with a sudden thought, and gaining her point she went back to her friends, oblivious of her Latin book. Mr. Pfeiffer was very sorry, he had a musical engagement that night, but Mr. Windgraff would most cheerfully come and bring his violin and notify his friends, Mr. Schmauker and Mr. Pfeffendorf. When Mr. Manlius thus returned to his own house the seriousness of his undertaking began to grow upon him. His children

were in bed, Mrs. Starkey also had withdrawn, and Mrs. Manlius alone sat waiting anxiously for him.

"They are all coming, Caroline," said he. "We shall have a full party, and it will be an important day in our lives."

"Will there be a policeman there?" asked Mrs. Manlius, timidly.

"A policeman? why should there be a policeman?"

"I thought perhaps you meant to take him up."

"That will not be necessary," said Mr. Manlius. "The sense of discovery makes the guilty man weak," and he gazed before him as if he saw the wicked falling on every side. Nevertheless, the words of his wife had brought sharply before him the somewhat vague character of his charges. It is so hard to prove things sometimes to persons unwilling to be convinced, and he could not help doubting whether the sense of the court would be immediately and heartily with him. He passed the next day somewhat nervously, reviewing his notes, and made visits to the upper part of his house in hopes of hearing new and confirmatory sounds. He walked out behind the houses also, and in general comported himself with so much mystery as to excite unbounded curiosity in the mind of his daughter Desire.

"Liz," said she, "I should n't wonder one bit if we were going to have a party. I heard Pop say something to mother this morning that looked like it."

"What was it, Dizzy?"

"I won't tell unless you tell me what Nicholas said to you when he met you in the court yesterday. I saw you, you sly girl! Oh, you pretend you only care for your Latin grammar."

"I shan't tell," said Lizzy, turning red.

"Then I shan't tell what Pop said." There was silence for a moment, each considering how she could

obtain the other's secret without parting with her own, each being aware in fact that her own was quite valueless unless it were kept a secret. At this moment their mother entered the room.

"Girls," said she, "your father and I will have to go out this evening, but I don't want you to tell Eunice."

"Oh, where are you going?" they both exclaimed at once."

"No matter," said she. "It 's some very important business of your father's."

"I heard," said Dizzy, making a daring venture. "It 's to a party."

"Desire, don't you dare to whisper a word of it to Eunice," said her mother, impressively. "Your father will be very angry with you if you do."

"I mean to plague Eunice and make her guess," said Dizzy.

"Don't you do any such thing," said her mother. "She 'll guess, and then you 'll be sorry." Mrs. Manlius had felt it necessary to tell the children, both to relieve her own mind, and because she saw they were very curious, and she thought that a little knowledge would quiet them; but she had only added fuel to the flame.

"I suppose you won't be back till after midnight," began Lizzy, dolefully.

"Oh, it an't a great way," said Mrs. Manlius, trying hard to tell nothing.

"It 's at Miss Pix's," said Desire. "I know."

"No, it is n't; not exactly," added her mother, faintly.

"It 's in the court, any way," pursued the tormentor.

"I don't see why we can't go," said Lizzy plaintively.

"Now Lizzy and Dizzy, don't you say another

word, nor ask another question, and I 'll tell you. Your father has been getting up a surprise party, and all the families in the court are going to spend the evening with Mrs. Blake."

"I knew it," said Dizzy, triumphantly. "I knew it just as well as not, and I 'm just dying to go too. I shall be thirteen next year and it's a burning shame we can't go. I mean to go."

"Dizzy!" said her mother in alarm. "You will do no such thing, and I am ashamed of you for talking in that way." Mrs. Manlius retreated after this, anxious to get out of the way of her children, lest they should by some hocus pocus accomplish what they threatened, and even get her consent to it.

When supper was over, and the two girls sat demurely in the dining-room, reading, while Mrs. Starkey was engaged in putting away the tea things, Mr. Manlius took the opportunity to say, —

"Girls, your mother and I are going out this evening, to be gone some time. You must go to bed now. Eunice, you need n't sit up for us; we shan't probably be back till quite late."

"Are you going a good distance, Pop?" asked Desire.

"Yes, it will be some time before we return," he replied.

"As far as the end of the court?" pursued his daughter.

"Dizzy, hold your tongue," said her father. "Did n't you hear me say we should be gone all the evening? You are very disrespectful."

"I did n't know but you wanted to surprise us," she replied, meekly.

"You can both go up-stairs, now," said her father. "Elizabeth, I am glad to see you reading so diligently,

but you need n't read any more to-night. You will want sound sleep for your head."

"I suppose we had better go to bed, Diz," said the studious girl, when they had reached their room. "Mother or Eunice will be coming up to see if we are safe."

"Yes, but don't you go to sleep. It would be awful to go to sleep and never wake up till morning."

CHAPTER VIII.

A HALF hour later, Mr. and Mrs. Manlius were dressed and ready for their part in the surprise. Mrs. Starkey sat down at her work, much wondering on what excursion the two had gone, for they were not much given to social journeys. She sat knitting by a dim light, economically turned down to its lowest burning point, and mechanically going over in her mind the routine of her to-morrow's work. Something in the quiet of the house, and the darkness of the room, led her mind along in a sluggish current of loneliness. She did not often lift her eyes, poor thing, out of the covered way in which she daily jogged; she had been benumbed by years of drudgery and by the despairing consciousness that when there was a sudden rattle of the wheels of her nature, she was animated without the satisfaction of knowing that she was animated, and enjoying it. She dreaded these returns of loquacity, which seized her now and then and bore her along upon a stream of hap-hazard talk which was a kind of nightmare to her in recollection. When she recalled it in the dull period that succeeded, it was possible only to catch certain solitary expressions or emotions — all the rest was a jumble. The knowledge that she was thus irrational humbled and depressed her. For the first time in years she had found some one who seemed to understand all this, without thereby misjudging her, and without constantly reminding her even tacitly of

the miserable infirmity under which she labored. She clung, therefore, to Mrs. Blake as to one who might possibly help her, might even, it sometimes seemed, extricate her from her confused misery. Already she had gone so far as to tell a little of her history to her neighbor, and she longed to confide in her wholly; it seemed as if by so doing she would take a step out of herself and into a freer, more natural air, where she could recover her true relations to herself and to others. The desire grew upon her, as she sat in the dismal room, and at last, yielding to it, she laid aside her work and getting her shawl and hood, set out for her neighbor's, meaning to make a little visit, from which she could return long before Mr. and Mrs. Manlius would be back. She closed the door, locking it, and carrying the key, and stood soon before Number Four. It was opened almost immediately as she rang, and Mrs. Starkey perceived at once that something unusual was going on. She would have retreated incontinently, but at the same moment Miss Pix had discovered her, and darted out.

"Bless my heart, Mrs. Starkey," said she, seizing her, "I thought you were Mr. Windgraff. You see I thought it might be a little awkward for him, and so I'd be on hand when he came." All this while she was removing Mrs. Starkey's hood and shawl, while the poor woman hearing voices, was making dumb show of protesting, as Miss Pix rattled on.

"I call this a genuine surprise, Mrs. Starkey," said she. "Mrs. Blake was just asking about you, and saying she wished you were here, and I 'm so glad you decided to come after all. Your second thoughts are such sensible ones. Now my second ones are good for nothing; I have to trust to the first ones that come. So walk right up-stairs with me; you leave your first

thoughts down here and I 'll take mine with me," and by sheer force of her good-natured will, little Miss Pix pulled Mrs. Starkey up to the room where Mrs. Blake sat, receiving her friends. Mrs. Starkey's heart sank within her as she saw Mr. Manlius with his hand in his waistcoat talking to Dr. Chocker. Her entrance made a little commotion, and it seemed to her that every one turned to stare at her as hard as did Mr. and Mrs. Manlius, but Mrs. Blake received her so affectionately, and gave her at once a seat so near her, that she felt in a measure at ease, though everything was whirling about. Mrs. Blake held her hand for a few minutes as she talked with her, and Miss Pix darted off again to lie in wait for Mr. Windgraff, since she had heard the bell ring again, and he was the only one wanting to complete the company, Mr. Schmauker and Mr. Pfeffendorf having sent their regrets and a promise to come later to Miss Pix's, when their evening work should be done. Mr. Windgraff presently appeared and made a profound bow to Mrs. Blake.

"The cake was very good," said he; "I have a piece of it yet. I have put it away in a box to keep as a souvenir."

"It is a souvenir of Miss Pix, too, you know," said Mrs. Blake, laughing; "for she made it."

"That I also know," said Mr. Windgraff, blushing a little.

"Come, Mr. Windgraff," whispered Miss Pix. "I want to introduce you to a new-comer in the court. She 's a granddaughter of old Dr. Chocker," and marching Mr. Windgraff across the room, she presented him with a fine flourish to Miss Sally Lovering, who was talking with her neighbor, Mr. Paul Le Clear.

"Do you live in the court?" she asked.

"No, I am not one of the Five Sisters," said Mr.

Windgraff; "but I am a neighbor. I live round the corner, and I was at the other party. You are a sister?"

"Yes, I am a sister," laughed Sally; "or a sister's granddaughter. Grandfather has told me about the Christmas party. I should like to have been there. What instrument did you play, Mr. Windgraff?"

"I play the violin. It is my professional instrument."

"Mr. Le Clear played the drum, he tells me."

"You played it well," said Mr. Windgraff. "Are you a drummer?"

"No," said that young gentlemen, amused; "I have sometimes tried to write on parchment; but I have never pounded it except for sport."

"I think I should like to drum, at times," said Sally. "It seems such an energetic performance; and then your drum seems to be such a solid part of the music. I watched the drummer yesterday, who played in the 'Meerstille,' and he looked so well satisfied when he was left, near the close, to play his drum all by himself, — he was the sole performer, and the piece could not go on till he was through."

"You were at the concert?" asked Mr. Windgraff, looking pleased. "And you liked it?"

"Oh, it was splendid. I went right off and bought the 'Meerstille' for my piano, but it sounded dreadfully thin and unsatisfactory, after hearing the orchestra."

"Yes," said Le Clear, "it has a certain change of scene about it, that cannot be expressed properly by a piano, which, after all, has no great emotional range. But what is Mr. Manlius about?" Miss Lovering and Mr. Windgraff turned, and saw Mr. Manlius standing, note-book in hand, by a table, upon which he rapped

with his knuckles. Mrs. Manlius was near him, fanning herself in an agitated way, and looking exceedingly uncomfortable.

"He must be about to read an address to Mrs. Blake," whispered Miss Lovering.

"It is Washington's Farewell Address," said Mr. Windgraff. "This is Washington's birthday." But it was neither, for Mr. Manlius, after getting the attention of the company, turned to Mrs. Blake, and said, —

"Mrs. Blake, our esteemed hostess, I am engaged in a somewhat delicate task, as I may say, and I have asked these friends and neighbors of ours to be present for the sake of corroborating and confirming my statements and my inferences. I hold here, madam, in my hand, a little note-book, which you may perhaps recollect seeing before. You may remember it, Mr. Judge. There are others who, if present, would swear that they had seen this little book before. Now I have a good memory, and I am in the habit of exercising my mind a good deal, turning matters that interest me over and over and cogitating upon them, but in matters of great importance I always use my note-book. I like to have what you, Dr. Chocker, I believe, call a man's *ipse dixit*, the very words that he utters," — he translated to the company at large, while Dr. Chocker, who stood solemnly with his ear-trumpet, turned to his nearest neighbor, who happened to be Mrs. Starkey, and relieved himself by saying in a vigorous whisper, "Oh that he had been writ down *asinus;*" "now in this note-book," he went on, shaking the little book significantly, "I have taken down various words said to me here, yes, here in this house, and in Kingston," — and at this he looked searchingly at Nicholas, whose face clouded with anger, and at Miss Lovering, who showed undisguised astonishment. "Miss Lovering will bear me

out in what I am going to say," — whereupon all the people turned to Sally, who bit her lip in vexation. But at this point Mrs. Blake interrupted him.

"Mr. Manlius," said she, quietly, "I do not know just what you may be about to say, but from the tone of your words I infer that you intend to excite suspicion against my nephew here. Is it so?"

"No, madam," said he; and then lowering his voice expressively, "but to make certain statements which shall prove my own instinctive convictions to have been well founded."

"It is all one," said she. "I will have nothing of the kind said to me, or in my presence. It is an insult."

"Suppose we let him say what he wishes, aunt," said Nicholas, his voice trembling a little with excitement. "I do not know, either, what he is about to say, but since he has gone so far, I should like to hear the rest. It certainly is better than to have all this insinuation of evil. Mr. Manlius, do me the favor to clear your mind of all you have on it." Mrs. Blake silently gave assent, nor was she displeased to have her nephew take the matter thus into his own hands.

"I will go on," said Mr. Manlius; "it is not the first time, madam, that one who has a painful public duty to perform has been suspected of false motives. Do you think it was for any personal aggrandizement of my own that I took pains to make these inquiries, to take an expensive journey, to neglect my business? No, madam, I did it all for your benefit, because I thought it was my duty as a member of society brought into contact with you, and with other dwellers in the court, to expose the iniquities of this interloper."

"Mr. Manlius, you will please confine yourself to facts, and spare us these names," said Nicholas.

"The names will keep, sir, the names will keep," cried Mr. Manlius, angry at the coolness of the person whom he regarded as the prisoner at the bar. "You want the facts, do you? Mrs. Blake and neighbors, Mrs. Manlius will bear me out when I say that in this room, on Christmas eve, I turned to her and said, 'that man is a base impostor;' and she will remember that before we came here, while we were yet in Miss Pix's hospitable parlor, before his pretensions had been exposed, I said, 'he is an impostor;' and now, with the full evidence in my possession, I repeat it, he is an impostor, and something worse. It has been my life-long study to read character, and what I read that night I have confirmed by careful examination since." The audience heard all this with more equanimity that Nicholas himself remained so much like one of them, and did not seem to be especially disturbed by the muttering about his head. Mrs. Manlius fanned herself excitedly, not daring to look at her husband; Miss Pix relieved herself by vicious little digs at the speaker with a pair of scissors, delivered from the other side of the room under the cover of Mr. Windgraff and Miss Lovering. Mr. Windgraff listened gravely, but with a blushing face, while Miss Lovering, looking shyly at Nicholas now and then, sat in evident pain, plainly the most uncomfortable person in the room. Her name had been used and she knew not into what disagreeable associations she was to be dragged. Mr. Le Clear pulled his moustache and eyed the different persons in the group, while his lip curled at the vulgarity of the whole proceeding. "It is a poor melodrama put on an insufficient stage," he whispered to Miss Lovering. Miss Lovering's grandfather had his trumpet turned to the speaker, to whom he listened, every once in a while taking his trumpet out and deliberately emptying the

supposed contents, then gravely replacing it, a pantomime which gave Miss Pix infinite pleasure, recognized by pantomimic applause on her part as she caught the old gentleman's eye. Mrs. Starkey, who was by Dr. Chocker, presented the most forlorn appearance. She glanced timidly at the speaker and then at Nicholas and Mrs. Blake, her eye traveling back and forth between them, as if she needed the assurance which the composure of the accused gave, to withstand the shock produced by the charges of the accuser. Yet, as Mr. Manlius went on, a change passed over her manner, and little by little the attention of the company settled on her and the speaker, rather than on Nicholas, for her drooping attitude gave place to excitement, and her eyes began to flash as she listened to the development of Mr. Manlius's accusation.

"On Saturday, the seventh day of January last past," continued Mr. Manlius, referring carefully to his note-book, "I called at eight o'clock in the evening upon my neighbor, Mrs. Eunice Blake, living in house Number Four, Amory Court, who received me in this room where we now are." Mr. Manlius looked round upon the company as if citing them all as witnesses to the important fact of the room. "We entered into conversation respecting her nephew. In the course of that conversation," — and here Mr. Manlius laid his forefinger on the several passages in his memorandum-book, — "Mrs. Blake informed me that her nephew had informed her that he had studied medicine privately with his father in the country — privately, yes, quite privately, in a small house on the side of Round Top Mountain, in the village of Kingston, as I afterward ascertained, not far from the house of one Silas King," — and here he looked steadfastly at Nicholas, glancing afterward at Miss Lovering, — "and his son Silas King,

and — his daughter, Emma King." Nicholas shaded his face with his hand, and then reached out for his aunt's hand, which was given him.

"Shall I stop him?" whispered Mrs. Blake, energetically; but Nicholas shook his head. Miss Lovering played with her handkerchief nervously.

"He studied medicine," Mr. Manlius went on, "but not with the purpose of practicing. I am quoting from the words of his aunt. Moreover, this young man carefully abstained from saying what his intentions were. He took possession of the upper story for what he calls his workshop and his bedroom. His aunt, confined to this room, is obliged to leave him to his own devices, and so carefully does he conceal his operations that the single domestic kept, a very trusty girl, Hannah by name," — here there was a decided rustle in the entry, and an excited whisper, —

"That's you, Hannah. Why don't you go in?" Mr. Manlius looked at his wife.

"Caroline," said he, "I heard Desire's voice. Did she come with you, Mrs. Starkey?" and he turned sternly to Mrs. Starkey.

"No, sir," said she, decisively. "If she came, it was of her own will." She was about to say more, but Mr. Manlius hastily proceeded: —

"Let her remain, let her remain. It may be a lesson to her for life."

"Liz is here, too," came the same whisper from the entry, but Mr. Manlius continued: —

"This girl Hannah is deliberately frightened by the young man to prevent her ever from entering his apartments. Indeed, so scrupulous was he in keeping his work secret, that five days afterward, when I called upon him, Thursday, the thirteenth ultimo, and undertook, as any friend naturally might, to visit him in his

own room, I was deliberately driven down-stairs again, but at that interview he himself confessed to me that he had intentionally prevented this Hannah, the only person who could enter, from ever going into his room, by threatening to poison her if she went in."

"Oh, what a fib!" came from the entry.

"And so guilty," continued Mr. Manlius, disregarding the interruption, — "so guilty was this young man's conscience that at the merely casual mention by me of the word *poison*, he — but I will read what I wrote in my note-book on the spot, my *ipse dixit*, in fact. 'I said, *with poison, for example*, when N. J. trembled violently, walking in agitation back and forth across the room, and not seeing me as I write these words.' There, that is like a photograph. The sun can't lie. as you have often heard it said. At this same interview he utterly refused to inform me from what part of the country he had come. I had previously learned, in conversation with our good friend, Miss Pix" —

"Well, what did you learn from me?" exploded that lady like a torpedo.

"That this young man had carefully concealed from her the facts regarding his early life, and she did not even know from where he had come." It was with difficulty that Miss Pix restrained herself from further indignant words. "Moreover, when I mentioned to him my wish to visit his native town on special business of my own, which I frankly explained to him, he the more refused to make known the place to me. But I was not thus to be balked, and at this point I may reverently say that what some people call chance opened the way to my further investigations. I was making a social call upon our learned friend, Dr. Chocker" —

"I'll thank you not to call me friend," said Dr. Chocker, tartly, "till you have proved this idiotic

case of yours." Mr. Manlius drew himself proudly up.

"I am ready to stand alone in this cause," said he. "I met at Dr. Chocker's his granddaughter, Miss Lovering, whom you see before you, and learned in conversation with her that she and the young man came from the same village." At this Nicholas looked up with half-opened eyelids and an odd expression of recognition as he bent his eyes on the young lady, who was red with mortification at the false position in which she found herself, and was tapping impatiently with her foot.

"Furthermore, when I came to inquire as to the character which the young man bore in his native village, I found from Miss Lovering's hesitation and guarded manner that there was something behind what she said; indeed, I gathered distinctly from her that his character would not bear searching tests, and that he concealed behind a plausible exterior a very doubtful, very doubtful life." Miss Lovering appealed to one and another near her, with mute protestation. Mr. Windgraff, whose face had been in a steady glow, here spoke up, —

"The Miss Lovering says that is all false."

"Hear him!" cried Miss Pix, excitedly poking Mr. Windgraff.

"Be that as it may," said Mr. Manlius, sternly, "I immediately resolved to examine this matter to the bottom, and the very next morning, Thursday, the fifth of February, I took the train to Kingston, where I spent the entire day amongst the clergy and intelligent population of that village, asking questions and examining witnesses, so to speak, in order to satisfy myself on the point. The testimony all pointed indubitably to one fact. In that village resided a so-called doctor

and his son." Nicholas made a motion to speak, but restrained himself. "They lived apart from people, seeing few, and knowing still fewer. They shut themselves up in their house, just as this young man shuts himself up in his room above this, and had their retorts and mortars, just as I have often heard, and Mrs. Starkey here has heard this young man pounding and concocting in his workshop above here. Now what does all this mean? I will tell you what it means. The doctor dies, and suddenly, without advising with any one, the young man leaves the town. He comes here, choosing the day before Christmas, as a time when there is a general disposition toward good fellowship and mirth. He calls upon the learned Dr. Chocker and passes himself off as the young gentleman whom I see before me, Mr. Paul Le Clear; he comes to my house and gives himself out as the nephew of the worthy woman to whom, for many years, I have given shelter and a home, and then, finding his way here throws her off rudely and claims a connection with the lady of the house. It is monstrous, incredible, but that is not all. Upon pretense he secludes himself, occupies a room remote from the rest of the household, where he works late into the night secretly; refuses all admission and does not even tell his aunt, as he calls her, what he is engaged upon. And why? Because, as in Kingston, Emma King was poisoned by the art of Dr. Judge."

"Stop, scoundrel!" exclaimed Nicholas, springing up. "Say what infernal nonsense you please about me, but don't you speak my father's name in that way."

"Soprian Manlius!" Every one turned in surprise. Mrs. Starkey had risen from her seat, and was leaning her hands upon the table near him. Her whole manner was changed. She was agitated and pale, but spoke with a slow, deliberate voice, that showed her

under control, but not the nerveless, passive woman to whom they were accustomed. "Soprian," she said again, "who am I?"

"Why, Eunice Starkey," said he, with a light air; and then, persuasively, "come Eunice, I think perhaps you and Caroline had better take the children home. I see they have come over here, and they ought to be in bed." He tapped his forehead significantly to the rest of the company, and Mrs. Manlius made a motion as if she would start.

"No, Soprian," said Mrs. Starkey, "you are wrong this time. I have my wits about me. I am clear in my head, and I know perfectly well when I am confused and when I am clear. I was confused last Christmas, when these people saw me; to-night I came here ignorant of your intentions, and stayed against my will, but a cloud has passed away, and I see things as I have tried to see them for a long while. Again I ask you, who am I?" She paused, but Mr. Manlius made no answer, save to shake his head dolefully and look pitying.

"I am the woman who was Eunice Brown. That you know, Mr. Judge, and you, Mrs. Blake, and you, Miss Pix. But you do not know, because I never told you, that when I was a girl I was to have married that man there. He promised to marry me, but suddenly my father died and it was found that I had no money. Then Soprian went away, — yes, I will tell the whole, Mr. Manlius, — and I waited for him but he did not come. Then he wrote to me that he heard I had a bad character and he could never marry me. Oh, how angry I was. It was not true, dear friends. No, there was not a word of truth in it, not a breath. But I was near dead with sickness after that, and when I came to life again, as it were, I was so sad and shaken that when Archibald

Starkey came and asked me to marry him, as he had often asked me before, I married him. It was a sin, God knows, I was so unhappy. And then he died, just a month after: if he had lived I think he would have won me, he was so patient like. But when he was dead, Oh my heart went out to Soprian. I thought now I was a widow I could go and see him, and perhaps it could all be as it was. God forgive me. I had no right to keep on loving him, but you see, dear friends, my sickness had made me strange like, and one while I was all hot to go to him, and another while I was dead with fear. But so it was that once when I was all in a fever I set out and I traveled. I had his letter and I knew where he wrote from, for it had a printed head and there was his name with his business and all. And when I got there it was dark, and the place was closed, but there was somebody by who knew where his house was, and so I found it, not here in this court, but where he lived then, in Sussex Street, and when I reached it I was cold, and numb, and dead like — how clear I remember it all now. The door opened and I saw his wife. I knew it was she, for she was a girl who had been in our village visiting, and she knew me, but she knew no evil against me. No, Caroline is not much to blame. She brought me in. I was half dead and I wanted, I said, to see Soprian. Then he came and he was going to put me out again, but I told him I had brought a little money with me and I would work in the house, for I had no home, and I would not trouble him. Yes, I loved him then and he knew it, but he said if Caroline knew it she would not let me live there. And oh, I wanted to live near him, and so I said nothing. But it was a terrible life, and all my love that was so hot burned out. Yes, it went into ashes and now it is cold, and when the times come upon

me again, as they do come, it may be once a month, I do not have to shut myself up lest I should betray myself, but I know I am light-headed and say many strange and silly things. But my friends, dear Mrs. Blake and all, I am not light-headed to-night. He has been telling me every little while this last year that I must go, he is tired of seeing me about, and indeed I do not wonder. And I had no place to go, not a friend whom I could speak to. Then you came, Mr. Judge, and light-headed as I was, I thought you might be my sister's son, for I had a sister who married a judge, but she died long ago. I caught at it, for I thought it was an escape, and then when it went out I should have utterly despaired, but I saw you, Mrs. Blake, and I saw your patience and your sweet face, and you were kind to me, and Miss Pix was kind, and I came here this evening when all was quiet at the house, thinking I would tell you all, but I did not know that there was any one to be here, and I did not know that I should sit and listen to what he has said, God forgive him, and hear him speak his base thoughts against this young man. I know nothing of his journeys, and his memorandum-books, and his conversations, but I heard enough to know that he is base and Nicholas Judge, here, is true and pure, and as I sat and heard him, it rose and it rose within me here in this place to say what I have said before you all, and I ask you, Soprian Manlius, is it true? Is it true?" There was silence in the room. All eyes were bent on the man, who had been sitting with his eyes shut, as if he could not bear to look upon such a perjurer before him, while Mrs. Manlius had her face buried in her handkerchief, and was sobbing silently behind it.

"That my children should hear such words!" said Mr. Manlius, solemnly. "Caroline, this is no place

for them, or for us. We have done our duty. We leave them to their own thoughts. What had I to gain by all this?" he asked generally of the company, looking about him; "was it anything for my personal advantage that I should undertake to expose this deceitful young man? You may judge between me and her. Come Caroline," and he went heavily out of the room and down the stairs; his children had already gone down before him and stood waiting below in terror. Mrs. Starkey bowed her heard on the table and the tears came, warm tears that flowed while she was mute with the fullness of her sorrow. One by one the guests, oppressed by the scene, went away silently, shaking hands with Mrs. Blake, but without words. They left the two women alone together. Nicholas also had left them, and reluctant to speak to the rest, had gone up into his room. As the company went downstairs, the door into Miss Pix's house was open and they all followed the lead of that good lady who beckoned them earnestly into her hall.

CHAPTER IX.

"DR. CHOCKER!" said Miss Pix, as the door closed behind them, "I want to waltz with you. I must do something. Here!" and darting at a sofa cushion, she seized a shawl and coat, and Mr. Windgraff's hat, and as the company looked on, at first in perplexity and then with separate explosions of discovery, she nimbly made up a portly figure which she propped up on a chair.

"Mr. Manlius, ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Soprian Manlius, the friend of Virtue, the protector of the fallen, the minister of Justice," and then with a vigorous sweep of her hand she batted the figure off the chair on to the floor, and seizing Dr. Chocker's hand, she motioned to Sally, who, catching her grandfather's other hand, gave her own to Mr. Le Clear, who completed the circle with Mr. Windgraff, and so they executed a triumphant war dance over the prostrate figure.

Miss Pix's ebullition had seized them all, but the stuffed enemy was too paltry to permit an excessive jubilation, and so Miss Pix, resolving the figure into its ultimate atoms, turned to Dr. Chocker, and said, —

"I want to get the taste of Mr. Manlius out of my mouth. Won't you let us have a little music?"

"I would n't mind singing a song myself," said the Doctor, wagging his trumpet, "if I knew one," he added, looking slyly at his granddaughter, as one who would have his little joke, "But she can play, — Sally can play, if she wants to."

"Do, dear Miss Lovering; nothing will put us into better humor."

"Perhaps Miss Lovering will play the 'Meerstille' now," said Mr. Le Clear. "Mr. Manlius has stirred us up so, that we ought to have some oil poured on the waters."

"The name of the person that begins with M is not to be mentioned again in my house," said Miss Pix, with crushing severity. "Yes, I have the piece — will you play it, Miss Lovering?"

"I have played very little before others," said the young lady, hesitating; then she drew off her gloves. "I will play something simple," said she, "if you and Mr. Windgraff will follow." She played a rondeau unaffectedly and then rose with alacrity. "Now, Miss Pix," said she, and that lady, calling Mr. Windgraff to her aid, began looking over her music. But Doctor Chocker showed evident signs of uneasiness, and his granddaughter, while looking wistfully at the two musicians, understood the intimations which he gave, and rose to bid Miss Pix good evening.

"Oh, but do stay," said she.

"Grandfather rarely goes out; and I think he was very good-natured to come to-night, so I am going to be equally good-natured, and return with him."

"Don't you ever marry," said Dr. Chocker, at this point. "Miss Pix, don't you ever marry an intelligence office keeper."

"I'd marry an idiot first," said Miss Pix, vehemently.

"Then you'd marry him," said the Doctor, with a triumphant chuckle. "Come, Sally."

"Miss Lovering," said Mr. Le Clear, "I should be very glad to be responsible for your safe delivery at Number One, if you can wait to hear the music."

"Oh, I should like to stay," said Sally, impulsively, but she hesitated; to make the arrangement with her grandfather was a little awkward.

"Here, let me explain," said Miss Pix. "Dr. Chocker, I owe your granddaughter a debt, and I can only pay it now in music. She promised to play if Mr. Windgraff and I would play afterward. Now, if you 'll leave her with me, I 'll see that she is safely returned to you. I know you won't stay. If I only had sixteen thousand books in black letter, and bound in old leather, I never could get you out of the house."

"Sally may stay," said the old gentleman. "Pay your debts; pay your debts," and he shuffled off, quite willing to finish the evening in his study. As the door closed behind him, there came a knock at the door which connected Miss Pix's house with her neighbor's. Miss Pix ran to open it.

"Oh, Nicholas, it 's you, is it? Come in, come in. We are going to have some music."

"I thought I heard some music, and that 's why I came. I want something to drive this evil spirit out of my house. You are playing alone, are n't you?"

"No, Mr. Windgraff is here," said the politic lady. "Shall we leave the door open, so that your aunt can hear?"

"Do, by all means," said he. "She was too tired to have me, and she has made Mrs. Starkey comfortable, so I have come away for a few minutes. Mr. Manlius came back again."

"Hush," said Miss Pix, covering his mouth. "Come into your entry. There. I don't want that man's name heard in my house again. Well, what did he come back for?"

"His key," said Nicholas, laughing. "Mrs. Starkey

had carried it off; the children let themselves out the back way, and so the family all got into the house that fashion ; but Mr. Manlius came again, and asked Hannah for it."

"Did she go and get it?"

"Oh, she told me, and I got it from Mrs. Starkey and went down to the door. He seemed to have shrunk somewhat. Somehow he looked leaner."

"My goodness!" said Miss Pix; "it was a collapse, depend upon it. He could not carry so much virtue, so he pricked it; how flabby he must be now."

Nicholas laughed. "I gave him the key, without saying a word. He said nothing, either; but he looked — well, I think he went off with the satisfaction of having put all his exploded virtue into a look. Bah! let us get away from him." They left Mrs. Blake's side of the door, and returned to Miss Pix's house. The delightful tuning of a violin could be heard, and Nicholas, expectant of his music, entered the room with a smile on his face which faded as he discovered that Miss Lovering and Mr. Le Clear were of the party. He bowed awkwardly. They were so much a part of the late performances that he had an uncomfortable consciousness of being still on his defense with them. Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff, as a private orchestra, were in a degree removed from his spiritual neighborhood. But he could not retreat, and besides, the music was coming.

Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff played with a nicety of harmony which was the result of long continued exercise. They were both teachers, and Mr. Windgraff a member also of one or two orchestras; but in spite of this professional attitude toward music they found their rest and contentment in an unrestrained enjoyment of the music which they were obliged to hear

put to torture every day of their lives. They had a passion for the old music writers, and by a private understanding contributed to what they called their Musical Fund, a box which stood in Miss Pix's parlor, into which each dropped, unknown to the other, such money as could be spared for purchase, from time to time, of music arranged for piano and violin. Neither claimed the music; but they declared that the resulting library should some day be presented to the most deserving and musical twins who should appear among their scholars. They made a delightful little mystery of the Musical Fund, and although Miss Pix never lacked any stimulus to her good spirits, it was almost a matter of doubt how they could have maintained their mutual pleasantry, if it had not been for the smiling Musical Fund, which was the occasion of so much merriment between them. The Musical Fund box was a contrivance of Mr. Windgraff's; a little music-box, which was set in operation by a crank. It played but one air, — an offertory, Mr. Windgraff declared — but at one point in the music, a little door flew open, and disclosed four hands held out; into them the money was dropped, and then they opened, by the weight of the coin, and let the pieces through into a treasury below. Nicholas had once slyly attempted to bestow a largess, in token of his gratitude for the music he heard in the room; but, for some reason, the contrivance failed to work, and Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff declared that the twins behind the scenes had never been introduced, and refused to shake hands.

"This little box is not as versatile as your music-box, Mr. Le Clear," said Nicholas, as his neighbor was examining it, in one of the intervals of the music.

"Mine?" he asked, in response, looking up with a

little surprise. "Oh, I remember, you called on me once. I have a music-box, Miss Lovering," he said, turning to the lady, "in default of any musical execution of my own; I am afraid it is a somewhat indolent substitute."

"I never heard a music-box," said she, "except this, though I have read of them."

"A good music-box," said Le Clear, "is certainly a very companionable little fellow. You wind it and it plays a little air with great accuracy, then rests a moment and plays another. The greatest charm I think is in the pause between the different airs; you have such a delicious expectation, and then the sounds tinkle again like a sort of musical rain."

"But it must be very mechanical."

"Oh, entirely so, but it is perfectly unpretentious. It does not profess to be a flute, or a violin, or a harp or an orchestra of any sort, and you are never confused by fancying somebody is playing. Besides, I never have to applaud when the music is over."

"I am afraid I should miss that part," said Sally. "I don't know that I always want to clap or stamp, that seems such a childish way of showing one's gratification, but I am divided between a desire to sit right down at the instrument that has been giving out the music, and a wish to say something agreeable to the person who has been playing."

"I feel so, too," said Nicholas, ingenuously. "I have sometimes fancied I should like to make an agreement with a respectable number of people to cry bravo! after a fine performance, but it requires too much courage for one to shout for himself."

"Did you ever try it?" asked Le Clear.

"Yes, I did, once. I was so excited over a passage in Ole Bull's playing, that I jumped up without think-

ing and shouted hurrah! which is American, I suppose, for bravo! but the instant I had done it there was such a dead silence about me that I fell to reading my programme intently, conscious all the time that people were staring at me."

"And what did Ole Bull say?" laughingly asked Miss Lovering.

"I really fancied that when I did venture my solitary shout, he saw me and smiled and bowed. At any rate I persuaded myself of this, in order to preserve my equability and during the rest of the concert was convinced that he looked steadfastly at me."

"I would give much to hear him," said Miss Lovering; but just then the music was resumed. Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff had a delightful freedom about their enjoyment of music. They did not seem to enter upon the evening's pleasure with any fixed plan, but dropped into such music as first suggested itself to them, and then rambled from one piece to another, until some chance or other led them to stop. This evening Miss Pix in the midst of a sonata suddenly remembered her responsibility in the matter of Miss Lovering, and jumped up from the music-stool, while Mr. Windgraff looked on in some surprise.

"Dear me," said she, "Miss Sally, there's your grandfather waiting for you, and he'll never trust you here again, if I don't take you right home."

"I am afraid he has forgotten me already," said Sally. "He gets among his books and that is the end of me in his mind till he sees me again."

"How charming," said Miss Pix; "so he is constantly discovering you anew," and she looked with a twinkle at the bright-faced girl before her. "I ought to have been a young man," she added, "I keep thinking of such polite things to say to my scholars and

other young girls. But then I suppose if I had been a young man, which heaven forbid, I should never have thought of them. Mr. Le Clear, will you kindly see me home after I have seen Miss Lovering home. That will necessitate your going with us, first."

"I should be happy to be kept going back and forth in the court on such errands," said the young man, with a bow.

"Why! how courtly we are getting to be," said Miss Pix, briskly, "and to think that before Christmas we all looked askance at each other. Mr. Windgraff, will you wait for me?"

"I will join the procession, too," said that gentleman. "I and my violin. You will escort Miss Lovering, and Mr. Le Clear will escort you, and I will escort Mr. Le Clear, and my little violin will escort me."

"Bravo! Mr. Windgraff," said Miss Pix. "There, I never said bravo before, and it sounds just like a book. Did you ever say bravo, Nicholas? Oh, I remember you did. You told me. Never mind," she added, seeing the color rise in Judge's face. "It 's a splendid word, and musical. Come, Nicholas, you can escort the little violin."

And so it came to pass that the entire company went out of Miss Pix's hospitable house to see Miss Lovering safe within her own house. Miss Pix took possession of her special charge, and as they passed Mr. Manlius's house, she shook her little fist at it, and said in an impressive whisper, "Avaunt!" so that it was almost a wonder the house and its inmates did not fly off with a frightened scream. Miss Lovering stood on the doorstep of her grandfather's house while the rest of the company bade her good-night. Mr. Le Clear fulfilled his duty conscientiously in walking back to Miss Pix's with her, and then they all separated to their several homes.

A week afterward, as Nicholas came into the court one afternoon, after a morning's absence, he met a furniture wagon going off well loaded, and standing one side in the narrow way to let it pass, he confronted for a moment Lizzy and Dizzy Manlius, bearing small packages and laboring under some excitement. Dizzy gave a tittering little scream, while Lizzy blushed a deep red.

"We 're going off," said Dizzy. She thought she would say it quite boldly, but the words were rather low.

"Ah? good-by," said Nicholas, looking a little puzzled. He entered the court, and saw evident signs of moving about the Manlius house. In the front room he saw a large man in his shirt sleeves putting up a placard in the window. It was Mr. Manlius. His wife's voice sounded in the passage, through the open door.

"S'prian, come S'prian." Nicholas hastened into his own house to share the news with his aunt. He found her with Mrs. Starkey sitting near her, pale and nervous. Mr. Manlius had left at the door such small odds and ends as defied orderly removal, with the remark that these belonged to that woman who used to live with them.

"Tell your mistress," he said to Hannah, in a loud voice, "that if she ever wants to learn anything about the character of Eunice Starkey, she can call on Soprian Manlius at the Temple," and then he had gone.

In the old sagas of Iceland and Scandinavia, the story-teller had a way of dismissing his characters one by one with a formal bow, and saying, "Now Gudmund" (or Flosi, or Skapti, as the case may be) "is out of this story," and Gudmund never came back, nor did the reader need to keep him in mind against some un-

expected turn of the story. Whether he was dead, or had gone to other lands, it matters nothing: he was out of the story. The tellers of modern sagas often dismiss their characters with an air of having got well rid of them, but the sagacious reader never sees one disappear mysteriously without making a note of it in readiness for the return. He out of the story? Not at all, but only lying in wait somewhere to spring back just in the nick of time. Nevertheless, I hold to the old way as the best, and with cheerful sincerity declare that now Mr. Manlius is out of this story, and out of it also are his wife, Mrs. Manlius, and his daughters, Elizabeth and Desire Manlius. They are all out of the story, and, like Dogberry, I would fain call the rest of the company together for thanksgiving.

CHAPTER X.

Dr. Chocker's household, before the advent of Miss Sally Lovering, had consisted of the Doctor himself and black Maria, the woman of all work. Maria had lived so long with her master, and learned so perfectly his few steps of routine, that in her small, remote way, she had acquired some of the Doctor's manner and even habits. Her library indeed was confined to a Bible and hymn-book, but she read these in the kitchen with something of the steady gaze which Dr. Chocker cast on his books in the third story, and her evenings were quite exclusively devoted to her study. Then the abrupt, apparently suspicious way of the Doctor was repeated in her, and she eyed every one of the rare visitors at the door with a scrutiny which was partly indeed the result of nearsightedness, but quite as much of a spiritual myopia which made it difficult for her to distinguish objects outside of the short range of her daily experience. She rose in the morning exactly half an hour before her master, who himself rose by the almanac, being called every morning precisely at sunrise, which was kept on record, so to speak, by an almanac, a clock, and a candle which always stood on a bracket outside of his chamber door. It was Maria's duty to visit this artificial sunrise every morning, and rap upon the door precisely at the moment when the sun himself was supposed to fire his light through the atmosphere. Then she could calculate upon just time enough to prepare the cup of chocolate which Dr.

Chocker always took when he entered his study. The scale of rising would have rendered the old gentleman's day somewhat irregular, but he carefully adjusted the corresponding scale of retirement, appointing that so as to allow exactly eight hours from the time he entered his bed until the time he rose. The lovely days of June were yet lingering in the west when the old scholar pulled his nightcap over his head and shut out all the beauty, but when the depth of winter was come, he could suffer his work to carry him into the dead hours of the night. By revolving as a lesser satellite about her master, Maria had attained to a similar expansion and contraction. She always waited until her master had left his study and gone to his chamber before she prepared to follow, and as she did every night the same round of work, her retirement was as punctual as her rising; though by necessity her night was shortened at both ends. She hung a little swinging lamp upon her wrist and then visited every window and door above and below, to assure herself that the house was firmly closed. She put in its place the simple contrivance by which her master's chocolate was to be prepared, and looked out of one window which she passed on her way to her room, to see what the weather was.

For forty years Dr. Chocker and Maria had lived here, he spinning his webs of thought in his study and going up and down the slender filaments, she repeating her regular cadences of movement up-stairs and down till her whole life seemed but one tune, and that played with endless iteration by one finger. There were few visitors at the Doctor's house, and those that came usually came by appointment, and Maria was always duly informed at breakfast just what was expected in the way of change during the day, so that she might adjust her personal machinery to what might otherwise

derange her. Those who came, without previous invitation must have strenuous reasons for pressing an entrance against the black visage that confronted them, holding the door ajar but a trifle and making a parley with the enemy before admitting them. The army of peddlers that tried to enter this Ilium, were forced to get out of any clumsy wooden horses they might have wheeled up to the door-way ; a vigilance which always seemed despotic held guard over the entrance, and Dr. Chocker no doubt owed many hours of quiet to the unrelenting scowl and crisp words which were not so much Maria's cruel nature, as her gradual absorption of her master's characteristics.

Once, fifteen years before, there had been a break in the monotonous course by the visit there for three months of a widowed daughter of the old man, and her little girl. Dr. Chocker's family had consisted of a son and daughter. His wife had died when they were young, and he had sent them to his wife's sister in Kingston to care for them. He himself, uncomfortably conscious of the slight domesticity of his nature and absorbed in his study, had determined that to keep them by him would be only to fritter away his own life and render theirs unhappy. So he sent them into the country and once a year they came to him for a day, Forefathers' Day he chose from a lingering feeling of pride in his ancestry, and their coming so unsettled his life that it was almost with a sense of relief that he learned at length of his son's death. Then the daughter came alone, and sat quietly reading in the dark parlor, trying not to disturb her father, whom she invested with a singular sanctity, worshiping at a distance, yet longing to come near. The day came, when in the quiet of the country she found another man made of a different mould from that in which her

father was cast, a sunny-tempered, vigorous man of action, Richard Lovering, and all her romance went out to her new *cœur de lion*. They went once to her father. But Dr. Chocker could not stand the sharp light of the young man; his heartiness and keen interest in affairs were constantly turning a "bull's eye" upon his life, and the old man was irritated by the sense of seeming to the young man only a visionary book-worm. He was offensively abrupt, and his daughter, with a woman's instinct, after interposing between them to shield each from the attack of the other's nature, withdrew her husband, and the two men did not again meet. She gave her husband her hearty admiration and love, but a faint taper always glimmered before the picture of her father in her memory.

When Richard Lovering died, leaving his widow with a little girl of five, the daughter once more sought her father. He felt a touch of remorse when he saw her, as if he had done some injustice to the dead, and suddenly offered her and her child a home. They came and stayed three months. Sally did not fear her grandfather, as her mother did, but went boldly into his sanctuary, sat down gravely before his books and alternately read what she pleased, and then turned her storehouses of knowledge into more practical use as blocks for building houses. She prattled to her grandfather and told him stories, when he could tell her none, and penetrated black Maria's domains, sitting in state in a high chair and superintending Maria's cooking, occasionally helping by being taster, sometimes even experimenting herself. She had perfect frankness and glee, and her merry voice was heard everywhere about the house. At first her mother tried to check her, but she could not transfer her own thought of her father to the child, and quickly discovered that

Sally had won in a few days, what she all her life had only seen as a mirage. Dr. Chocker was weary when they came, though he scarcely knew it, and the child was elixir to him. But the native freshness and wild wood life of the child were fast being exhausted in the close air of the house. She began to droop and look wistful, and once more the Doctor was left to himself and his books, while the mother and child went back to their country home. There Sally had ever since lived, having the memory of her city life as some distant scene which was covered with a faint haze. Dr. Chocker did not invite them again to his home. Though he longed to see the child, he steeled himself against the thought of her, or postponed his invitation from time to time, always expecting the day, which never came, when he should have completed a task that would allow him the leisure which he pretended to believe was necessary before he could again have visitors. Then as the child grew, the old gentleman came to present her to himself as an awkward, angular girl, and he persuaded himself that he would rather remember the merry innocent who fearlessly invaded his sanctuary, than make fresh acquaintance with a shy or noisy girl who had lost the bloom of innocence and would always be on her guard with him. He had letters now and then from his daughter; then came a broken little letter of patched up sentences from Sally, written in a very straight, up and down hand, to her dear grandfather telling of her mother's death, and that she was living with her aunts Miriam and Rebecca. The Doctor had never seen these ladies, maiden sisters of his son-in-law, and they, less from what they had heard than from what they had not heard, looked with no great ardor upon their niece's grandfather. He wrote a short note in lead pencil to Sally, abrupt and with all its

affection jerked into a postscript in the corner: "When your aunts want you to come to the city, come to me." Sally put the note away with her special possessions, and her grandfather hid her letter in his desk. The young girl grew in her country home, and with her growth there came wishes and dreams which the country failed to satisfy. Her aunts saw this. They had put off the evil day when she must fly from her nest, by giving her those higher pleasures which render one independent. They had given her music and had found a drawing-master for her, and her music and drawing had been the channels into which her ambition and eagerness had run; but they brought her also new desires, and sometimes when the keys of her piano-forte sounded back the little black symbols of the music page, she was thrilled with emotion at the thought of what music must be in the great harmony of an orchestra. Engravings and photographs were but reminders of what she seemed once to have seen of art that bore the master's own touch, and while the sweet country about her was an unfailing source of strength and joy, the distant whir of the locomotive sometimes surprised her into a passionate desire to see the cities which somehow seemed to possess literature and history. Her aunts trained her in the ways of the church, and she entered heartily into the devotional life of the decorous but not over active body of worshipers; yet sometimes there she caught herself repeating in a whisper certain lines which always seemed to swell into a domed church in her imagination: —

> "'T was on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
> Came children, walking two and two, in red, and blue, and green:
> Gray-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as snow,
> Till into the high dome of Paul's, they like Thames' waters flow.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
> Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands."

It is true she was wise enough to know that no lofty cathedral gathered the worship of the near city, yet she felt a strong desire to realize in more positive form some of those glowing pictures of human worship which are half in the poet's mind and half in a young girl's imagination.

Her aunts watched the reveries that passed in Sally's mind and betrayed themselves unconsciously to her in little ways. It was plain that she was already partly away from them, and so, as Dr. Chocker had let the homesick little girl go back to the country, her aunts now, with many misgivings but with some insight into their niece's thought, prepared to let her go to the city. Miss Miriam Lovering addressed a letter to Dr. Chocker just after Christmas, which brought back one of his pencil notes bidding her send his granddaughter to him.

"If she can be content with an old man like me, she can come, but I am very busy myself, among my books, and she will lead a still life for a young girl." So his letter read.

"The Doctor is growing old, Miriam," said her sister, when she had read the letter. "His handwriting trembles, and I think there is a touch more of gentleness in his manner. After all, it may be that Sally can carry him comfort. Her mother would have gone now, I think, if she had seen this writing. But he never felt toward her as he should."

"The Doctor must be nearly eighty, Rebecca. I think I should like to see Sally again when I am eighty." Miss Lovering rarely gave way to much feeling. A decorous self-restraint had been the law of her life, but there were times like this, when it was necessary to poke the fire vigorously, with her back to any one else who might be in the room.

The visit was to last until the warm weather came, when the country would be the most desirable place. Sally had only a childish recollection of her grandfather and his surroundings, and it was a little difficult for her to repress a smile at her own enthusiasm as her prudent judgment interposed a picture of herself, sitting demurely at her grandfather's table in a little house in a dingy court, rarely going out, but calling all this, visiting in the city. Her aunts waited until the opportunity was presented of their clergyman going to the city, when their niece was placed in his charge and deposited safely at the grandfather's house in Five-Sister's Court.

There we find her now, reinstated in her old authority, her prudence and her memory and imagination all justified by a condition of things which answered the picture drawn by each when modified properly by the others. She looked with an amused, interested air on her grandfather's pursuits, and since her own training had been intellectual, as well as aesthetical, she gave him that respect and admiration which his evident learning called for. Thus her old fearless affection caught her mother's reverence, while her more intelligent admiration kept it still unembarrassed. She had her own amusements and occupations, and as visitors were almost unknown, she had gradually taken possession of the disused parlor and let in not only the outer sunshine, but such reflections from her own good temper and good taste as seemed to follow naturally upon her living in it. She went to her grandfather when she would, but soon learned to know when he was most ready to welcome her. She put herself under Maria's direction and professed to learn her ways, when all the while she was making such little changes in the *ménage* as would have produced a revolution

had they been boldly incorporated in a bill of rights. She had her music, her strolls among the shops and libraries, her afternoon concerts, and her calls upon Miss Pix and Mrs. Blake. She went each Sunday to church, and somehow, finding no dome large enough to cover her religious imagination, she was more than content with a modest sanctuary, which had for its greatest charm that it was most like her old church home in the country.

Dr. Chocker received these introductions of light into his dwelling with some uneasiness at first, but finding his granddaughter apparently unsuspicious that she was engaged upon any disturbance of his peace, he gradually abandoned his own watch of her, and dropped into the new current of life with a half feeling of the warmer temperature which it bore. Little by little, the girl who had so quietly entered his castle became the mistress of it, and he was uneasy when she was not at hand. He heard the door open and knew she had come home, and that was enough. He had no particular desire to see her, nothing in special to say to her, but her coming restored the regular movement of his life which was partially arrested when she was away from him. Their talks at the table were strange snares to the old gentleman. Sally, with her reminiscences of concert, or picture-gallery, or church, was to him a sort of magpie, displaying bits of colored glass and ribbon, of no mortal use except to delight a magpie's eye. She chatted of these things because her young head was full of them, and he threw in his curt observations as one would shake a kaleidoscope to see what new figures the jostling would bring out. But the talk made havoc with Dr. Chocker's time-table, which had not been so carefully adjusted all these years to submit easily to these infringements upon it; and Maria used once in a

while to wonder why it was that though breakfast was so much longer than formerly she yet was able to get through her work as usual.

At the breakfast table, the morning after the retreat of Mr. Manlius and his family from the court and this story, Miss Lovering had her mind quite full of the event. She sat at table by the side of her grandfather for greater ease in conversation, so that one coming into the room would have fancied they formed the residue of some greater company that had gradually disappeared, leaving two extremes of a circle together.

"Yes, he is actually gone, grandfather," she said, "and I wonder who now will take his house. I think I should like a family with very, very small children."

"What is the least size that will answer?" asked Dr. Chocker.

"Well, I never saw any children quite small enough to suit me," she replied. "I should like to see a child beginning very far back, small enough, for instance, to be carried about in a work-basket."

"It would probably grow to the size of Mr. Manlius," said the Doctor, sagaciously. "There 's too much virtue in that house. I 'd like to see it shut up for a while."

"I wish Mr. Windgraff would take it," said Sally, who was busy in her mind arranging matters to suit her. "He would be an excellent neighbor, and he does play delightfully. I think he 's splendid."

"Who 's Mr. Windgraff?" asked Dr. Chocker, in sudden alarm.

"Why, he 's one of Miss Pix's friends. He was at Mrs. Blake's that evening, and he played with Miss Pix afterward."

"Oh, that one. Well, has he little children small enough to carry round in a work-basket?"

"Oh, no," said Sally. "He 's not married. He 's only wedded to his violin, as they say in books."

"That 's the safest kind," said Dr. Chocker, sagely. "Then the risk 's all on one side. You want more neighbors, eh, Sally? You 're lonely here;" and the old gentleman put his cup down and looked wistfully at her.

"Not a bit, grandpa. You know I 've always lived in the country, and have seen very few people. It is like a play to watch the people in the streets. I make up stories about them to myself, and if they 're not true I don't know it at any rate. Oh, I am not in the least lonely. I don't see how one can be, in the city."

"Should n't you think I 'd be lonely?" asked the Doctor, looking narrowly at his granddaughter, "living here so long, with my books, and Maria, — till you came," he added, hesitating.

"Why, I suppose books are people to you, and you make up stories out of them to please yourself. And then, besides, you and I have no right to talk about being lonely, when we have each other."

"We 're getting sentimental, Sally," said the Doctor, rising. "That won't do for you and me," and he shuffled off to his study. It was a bright morning, early in March, and perhaps the mention of the country combined with some subtle invitation in the air to give Miss Lovering a sudden impulse to get away for a while from the streets of the city. The city is after all but a great house. One talks of going out of doors, but it is only to go into a little more open passage-way where there is a stronger draught, if one merely steps into the street. One is not fairly out of doors until the blocks of houses and the busy streets have been left behind, and one comes into sight of water and hills and woods. The air was sparkling with just a touch

of frostiness; the sun was not high enough yet to have penetrated very far into the heart of things, and a bright light seemed to cover everything. The girl took her way as quickly as possible to a causeway which led by the river directly out of the city. Houses were creeping down the street which ended in the causeway, and the neighboring district was rapidly changing from a condition of mud and brackish water and salt-marsh, into one of solid desert formed by the loads of gravel which rumbled day and night thither. But the passage from city to country was more abrupt this way than any other, and in less than half an hour the rapid walker found herself passing trees and fields, and on her way to a high hill from which she knew a wide view could be had. There had been a fall of snow the night before, but it had dropped so lightly, and without any wind stirring, that it seemed now as if a breath would puff it all away. The fields, the marsh meadows with their stiff dry stalks of grass, like hair always alternating between a languid moisture and a bristling dryness, were covered with a light film of snow. The fir-trees and the leafless walnuts and chestnuts and elms blossomed with it; or rather it was as if in a night they had all put forth some wonderful winter foliage, that smiled in the sun and took on the most delicious hues. It was an arctic dream of summer.

When Miss Lovering had climbed the high hill which was the goal of her walk, the view in all directions was brilliant in the extreme. She was too far away from the streets of the city and the country roads to see that the snow was melting fast and losing its crisp beauty, and the white veil that was thrown over everything gave an exceeding beauty to the landscape. The river sparkled, the bright points of city towers and spires and domes caught the light and tossed it off, while be-

hind her, the wooded hills and quiet country rolled away in soft undulations. She brushed the light snow off a rock upon the loose stone wall that rambled up the hill, and sat down in a little nook to enjoy to the full the prospect before her. The city stretching out its bridges and causeway and long lines of houses, seemed like some huge insect that was feeling about with its antennæ. She saw patches of woods between her and the city, with substantial houses looking out from the inclosures, and began after her wont to imagine the cosy life of the dwellers in these half rural, half city domains.

The road by which she had come crossed the hill, descending the other declivity, and three or four plain houses were scattered along it. One, especially, with a magnificent view, could be seen from a great distance, and its commonplace character seemed magnified into blank ugliness; near by, it looked no worse than a multitude of every-day houses. It was its conspicuousness that made its dullness so offensive. In the winter time few people, other than the occupants of the houses, traveled this road; in summer time, especially Sunday evenings, small companies toiled up the hill for the view, and carriages went up by slow degrees.

The hill was not bisected by any road crossing at right angles, so that Miss Lovering, sitting on the stone wall with her feet drawn up and resting on a projecting stone, was taken by surprise as she heard a crunching sound behind her and knew that some one was crossing the field which fell rapidly to a lower, parallel road. She was about to get down from her perch when the intruder at the same moment reached the wall a little below where she sat and jumped over it into the road. She was partly sheltered by the trunk of a tree and she drew back, thinking to escape observation,

when the steps moved up the road. The young man who had disturbed her peace cast a side glance as he went by, and she saw to her surprise that it was her neighbor, Nicholas Judge. She recognized him with a hurried bow, a trifle disconcerted at the encounter, and he, returning it, made as if he would pass on, and then suddenly turned back and went to her. She got down from her perch and came out into the road.

"I thought I could not be mistaken," said he. "I was quite sure it was you when I was coming up the hill." He stammered his words somewhat, as if he had been guilty of making observations behind her back.

"Yes, it is I," said she, composedly, when he seemed to have finished.

"Did you know that you could see Round Top from that hill yonder?" he asked, suddenly. "I have just been over there."

"Indeed. I have never been there."

"Yes," he said, scarcely noticing her indifference. "You can see it quite plainly. I often go there when I — I want to see Kingston." Miss Lovering was tapping with her foot on the ground and looking off upon the city; his sentence seemed somehow to drop into a different ending from what was forecast.

"I like this view very much," said his companion. "There is so much life in it. I am never tired of watching the city, especially in winter time; though to be sure," she added, hastily, "I never saw the city in the summer."

"Nor I," said Nicholas, "and I hope I never shall."

"I do not believe it ever could look uninteresting," she replied, "and from this hill, it might look very cool."

"You were quite a young girl when you were here before, were n't you?" asked Nicholas. "I remember when you came back to Kingston."

"Yes," she said. "What is that high building that stands by itself in that direction," pointing as she spoke.

"That is a grain elevator," said he. "It is used for storing grain. Have you been at the top of the hill, Miss Lovering? I was just on my way, and I can show you some fine views of the other side."

"Thank you," said she. "I have gone as far as it is quite wise for me to go, and I think I must bid you good-morning." Nicholas returned her bow and walked rapidly up the hill, while she turned away and hastened down. Miss Lovering's walk home was not marked by the exhilaration which she felt on the outward course. She was annoyed by her recollection of the slight talk. He was so awkward. "I was awkward myself," she cried in her mind, "because he made me. Why did he talk so familiarly to me? he spoke as if we had been old friends in Kingston. I am sure I did not come here to see him." There was vexation in her mind at the encounter, and her thoughts naturally turned to her home in Kingston. She had seen Nicholas there, but never to know him. There had always been a village mystery about him and his father, and although the painful death of Silas King's sister had been traced to her own curiosity and recklessness, it left an unpleasant smoke about the lonely house and the old man and his taciturn son. She had seen the boy at church, and her aunts had spoken with him now and then, but for herself she had never exchanged any words with him, and it was with an undefined sense of annoyance that she had discovered immediately upon her arrival at her grandfather's house, that the young man was a near neighbor and rested under a new cloud. Although she had seen that dissipated, it was quite impossible for her to look upon him other than as an uncertain sort of person who be-

longed nowhere and with whom she could have little in common. It had been, indeed, something of a trial to her to find that Mrs. Blake, whom she had kept in her memory for many years, and whose acquaintance she had gladly renewed, was the aunt of this young Judge and had given him a home. She rarely met the nephew, however, when she visited Mrs. Blake. Once or twice he had been in his aunt's room, when she had entered somewhat unceremoniously, and he never seemed then to have the same awkwardness and stumbling manner with which he greeted her, when he met her casually in the passages or in the court.

CHAPTER XI.

The snow had been melting rapidly, and when Miss Lovering reached the city again, the general sloppiness of the streets rendered walking anything but agreeable, so that she found herself again, in Five-Sisters Court, fatigued and dispirited. Maria opened the door for her and handed her a note.

"Miss Pix left this," she said, "she was mortal sorry not to see you. She came twice, and the second time she brought this." It was a note inclosing a ticket to an afternoon concert, which Miss Pix also hoped to attend, but as she had engagements up to the moment of the concert, she must leave Miss Sally to go alone. The note and ticket were enough at once to restore the young lady's equanimity, and at dinner time she gave an animated account to her grandfather of the walk she had taken, omitting in her narrative all that was disagreeable, and consequently failing to report the interruption she had suffered.

The concert was in the great hall of the city, a hall which from its size and associations gave perhaps the most complete satisfaction to Miss Lovering as an embodiment of her desires for city life. She had never been to the theatre, she had never beheld the musical pageant of the opera, and I am not sure that she would have yielded with sufficient abandon to the fascination either of the play or of the opera. But the symphony was to her the perfection of art, and to find what she

had studied at her piano-forte, brought out with all the multitudinous wealth of the orchestra, was to enter into the fullest possession of what music could give her.

The hall itself, to her who had seen no complex architectural structures, was impressive and in harmony with the music which she heard there. Its fine proportions, its simplicity of lines, its orderly arrangement, so that when empty there was nevertheless a certain individuality about the seats, that made them look like silent listeners to unplayed music, all combined to make it her favorite haunt. The hall was not without its mystery; a dark passage beneath the gallery in the rear, by which persons crossed the hall out of sight, was entered and explored with a suspicious feeling lest unknown peril might be lurking there. Her only criticism was upon the metallic screen which covered the wall back of the orchestra. It always seemed a pity to her that when hearing great music her eye could not rest on some more majestic form.

This afternoon she was in her seat early, watching the audience as it gathered, and catching now and then the distant sound of the tuning of instruments behind the stage. The programme was made up mainly of music to be given by the entire orchestra, but the great attraction of the afternoon to most was the promise of some solos on the violin by one who was held by many to be the greatest of living violinists, and was then in the country.

As the orchestra came in, Miss Lovering looked at once for Mr. Windgraff. There was a pleasure in discovering a friend in the orchestra. She already knew, with his assistance, the names of several of the musicians, and Mr. Pfeiffer, Mr. Schmauker, and Mr. Pfeffendorf she had met once at Miss Pix's; but Mr. Wind-

graff was a friend, and when now he turned his eyes to where she sat and bowed with a blush, she was thrown into a little flutter of excitement. Miss Pix had not yet come and her seat awaited her. As the music began, however, Miss Lovering gave herself up to it after a sigh of regret for her companion's absence, and entered upon a gentle succession of fancies which familiar music always excited in her. She had heard the overture and the symphony which followed, and had moreover practiced them both on her piano, so that she needed not to strain her attention, but as each phrase followed the last, her mind seemed to run before just far enough to receive and welcome it as an old friend.

The violin solo followed, and Miss Lovering looked with delight as the master stood there with that smile, that graceful bearing, that strange air which seemed to separate him from other men and to place him by himself, as a charmer, whom to see and hear was to acknowledge as having a fascination which was not all in his music nor all in his bearing, but an effluence from his whole personality. She could think of nothing but Orpheus, and was almost ready to obey the invitation which seemed to lie in the music, and to follow its sounds whithersoever they might lead her. There was, besides, about the music a certain homeliness, as if the violinist had little in common with professional musicians, and drew his music from themes which could not be handled by an orchestra, but were adapted solely to the apparent improvisation of one who with his violin had drawn a charmed circle, and within that was discoursing from his soul through his sympathetic instrument. All this passed with more or less distinctness in the young girl's mind as she came out of the trance and listened abstractedly to the music which succeeded the solo.

There was an intermission between the two parts of the concert, and as she was wondering why Miss Pix did not appear, and looking about the near audience, she saw Mr. Windgraff coming up the aisle to her seat.

"Ah, Mr. Windgraff," said she, "where is Miss Pix?"

"So was I about to ask you," said that gentleman.

"She was to be here; this is her seat. Oh, why was she not here to hear that violin."

"Is it the violin," he asked, "or is it the violinist?"

"There is neither violin nor violinist to me," she said, "but it is all melted into one."

"Very good," said Mr. Windgraff. "You have said it well. And why is it that it is no different? I heard that same violinist — violin — you call it — twenty year ago and no different."

"Perhaps it is magic," said a voice by their side. "Good afternoon, Miss Lovering, Mr. Windgraff. I should be glad to know the secret of this man's power." It was Le Clear, who had come up to speak to Miss Lovering as Mr. Windgraff also approached. "Mr. Windgraff, you know the violin well? what is the secret of this genius?"

"Tell me the secret of any genius;" said that gentleman, sententiously. "Now I must leave you two to find it out. You will tell Miss Pix, Miss Lovering, what she lost?"

"Indeed, I cannot tell her," said Miss Lovering, smiling. "She would need hear it herself to know!"

"Very good again," said the musician bowing profoundly and returning to his post.

"May I keep Miss Pix's seat for her?" asked Le Clear. Miss Lovering made room for him, and he took his seat beside her.

"I suspect," said he, "that part of the secret lies in his solitariness. I have heard him in concerts when there were other soloists, but though they might have been respectable elsewhere, they seemed coarse and commonplace when he played. He threw no charm over those who aided him. Indeed, he seems to me to dwell in a charmed circle. I can fancy him waving that glittering bow of his and putting every one else aside. In that he has always lived. He has not grown at all. You heard what Mr. Windgraff said. He has been playing for twenty years the same airs with the same perfection. The world cares less for him than it once did. He is his own ancestor, his own posterity. He has advanced from nothing, he has given birth to nothing. But when all is said, how beautiful he remains! a northern poem!"

"You make me think of Shakspere's sonnet," began Miss Lovering; but at that moment the tap of the conductor's baton was heard and the music was resumed. Mr. Le Clear remained in his seat, and Miss Pix did not come to claim it. Miss Lovering found a special exhilaration in the second part of the concert. Something in the companionship she had, stimulated her, and she found herself listening with ears attent, catching at the phrases and weaving new webs of thought. A few words passed between them during the short intervals, and when the concert was over, Miss Lovering rose with a sigh.

"I have not enjoyed a concert so much for a long time," said she; "if only Miss Pix had been here." Mr. Le Clear half concealed a smile, and she hastened to add, a little confused, "But I am none the less obliged to you. I think I only half hear, when alone, sometimes," for she remembered, suddenly, certain occasions when it seemed as if music could not be shared.

"Is walking alone only half a walk?" asked her companion. "If so, I should be glad to add the other half."

"Oh, I am a very independent walker," said she, "But I believe I can keep step." They passed out of the hall, and avoiding the street walked leisurely down under the leafless boughs of the elms that overhung a mall adjoining.

"The music struck up very inopportunely once," said Le Clear, "just as I was to hear which of Shakspere's sonnets it was that was in your mind."

"Oh, what you said chimed in with lines that had been running in my head: —

> "From fairest creatures we desire increase
> That thereby beauty's rose might never die.
> . . . . . .
> But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes
> Feedst thy light flame with self-substantial fuel,
> Making a famine where abundance lies
> Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel."

"I am glad," he said, "that there is so much obscurity about the actual personal suggestion of Shakspere's sonnets. Now we can all make our own interpretations, and no one can pin us down to unmistakable historic references."

"Still, I should like to know," said she. "He must have started from some actual facts, and I do not see why we should be the worse off for knowing them."

"But should we be the better?" continued he. "Poetry, especially great poetry, has cut loose from its immediate suggestion, and has become common property. To take another instance, Spenser's Faerie Queene has certain well established historic foundations, but does any one read it with greater pleasure for seeing in it an idealization of Queen Elizabeth?"

"Why, yes. I read the poem for the pleasure it gives, and then afterward I am interested in tracing Spenser's English feeling. I don't know much about it," she added, laughing, "and I talk as if I had lore. Lore I think is a fine word."

"Yes," said he, "especially when so pronounced. Unless you roll your *r*, I don't like it. I would rather enjoy lore than practice law. By the way, did you ever study metres much?"

"No, I learned prosody."

"Well, I looked into the matter once, and I have a theory about the measure of the Faerie Queene, the Spenserian stanza that is so much admired. But here we are in this tortuous court. Miss Lovering, may I have the pleasure of calling upon you?"

"Thank you, Mr. Le Clear. I shall be happy to see you, — you may bring your little theory with you, too, if you like. But I am going first to see Miss Pix, to see why she was not at the concert." Mr. Le Clear bade her good evening at the door, and Miss Lovering entered the little house. She heard the notes of a piano, and spied Miss Pix seated at it.

"Come in, Miss Sally," said that lady, wheeling round on her stool. "You see my concert lasts longer than yours."

"Oh, but why were you not there, Miss Pix. It was glorious!"

"I 've not a doubt of it. And how did our young friend like it?"

Miss Lovering colored a little.

"Oh, he enjoyed it very much, and I found him quite agreeable. He seemed to know all about the music and the musicians."

"Bless me! where has he been hiding his knowledge all this time?"

"But tell me, why did you not come, Miss Pix? I wanted you there ever so much."

"I supposed you would guess the reason," said she, with a merry twinkle. Miss Lovering looked bewildered; "or at any rate that Nicholas would have set your mind at rest about my coming."

"Nicholas? Mr. Judge? Why, I have not seen him. At least I did not see him at the concert."

"Did not see him? why, he had my ticket. Did you not take the seat that was numbered on your ticket?"

"Certainly."

"Well, whom were you speaking of, then, when you said he made himself agreeable?"

"Why, I was speaking of Mr. Le Clear. I wondered that you should ask, but presumed you saw us from your window just now. He came and spoke to me, during the intermission; and afterward, as you were not there, kept your seat. Mr. Windgraff came down, too, and was disappointed at not seeing you." Miss Pix rubbed her nose, with an odd look of discomfiture.

"I was getting ready to go to the concert, when I ran in to see Mrs. Blake a moment, and there I saw Master Nicholas looking so rueful, that I made up my mind he needed a tonic sol fa, so I gave him my ticket for a prescription. I suppose he never looked at the number, but just hid himself in the farthest corner of the upper gallery. Well, well! I hope he had the grace to enjoy the music. There he is now;" and Miss Pix ran to the door that connected her house with Mrs. Blake's. Miss Lovering would very readily have taken her leave, but she had no chance to say good-by before her hostess returned, bringing the young man with her.

"Give an account of yourself, Master Nicholas," she cried. "You are not so obedient as Miss Lovering. I had two tickets for the concert. I give her one, and she takes it and her seat dutifully. I give you the other, and you go off no one knows where. I warrant you followed the man who lights the gas at the top of the building; but you don't look very dusty," she added, surveying his coat critically. Nicholas laughed.

"I should like nothing better than to find myself in that mysterious passage under the eaves. How the lighter gets there is a mystery to me. I have thought of bribing him to let me take his taper some afternoon, and touch off the gas points. How diminutive the people on the floor and the orchestra on the stage must look from that height."

"I wonder," said Miss Lovering, "if he has to crawl, or stoop, when he disappears at the corner"—

"And comes out again, like the Arethusa," said Nicholas, gayly. "Yes, all those mysteries I should settle, if I once could find my way up there. But perhaps it will be better to leave Yarrow unvisited."

"What are you two crazy people talking about," said Miss Pix, whose reading was of the slightest;—"Arethusa? Yarrow? Come, how did you like the concert, Nicholas; and what was the highest point you could get at from which to enjoy it? and did it drive out that evil spirit which seemed to possess you?" Nicholas colored a little, but kept his eye fixed on Miss Pix.

"I found a corner in the second gallery and persuaded myself that the music was strained when it reached me. Certainly I never heard any such fine and penetrating sounds as came from that violin. They were so liquid that I fancied if I opened my eyes I should see slender streams of music flowing off from

the strings of the instrument." Nicholas laughed as he said this, as if to take off the edge of too much sentiment. "I thought of David and King Saul, and fancied again that every time the violin bow was drawn, an arrow was fired straight at the evil spirit that possessed Saul."

"Bravo, Nicholas!" cried Miss Pix, clapping her hands. "My ticket was well spent. But tell me, what did you like best of all?" Nicholas hesitated a moment.

"I suppose," he finally said "it is a very uneducated taste, but I was more moved, when he was called back and played 'Home, sweet home' for an *encore*. I could enjoy all the concert, but when I heard that I could build my pleasure on a previous exact knowledge, however simple, for I have sung that song, and I did not know any of the other pieces. I confess I felt a moderate amount of envy of those who were always remembering while they listened." He turned to Miss Lovering.

"You have not told us what you liked best," said he, "or perhaps you have told Miss Pix."

"I do not know that I have asked myself the question before," said she, "but I am inclined to think, at least so it seems at this moment, that I too liked the *encore* best — it seemed so entirely in keeping with his style and manner of playing. Perhaps if we had heard some folk-song of his own country, that would have been even more characteristic."

"Well," said Miss Pix, as her guests at the same moment rose to take their leave; "I have almost heard the concert myself. But tell me, Nicholas, did the music really sound better in the gallery, or did it really sound better on the floor, Miss Sally?"

"I don't see how that question is ever to be answered by two persons," said the young lady.

"Then tell me, Nicholas," she persisted. "How was it? For you heard it both on the floor and in the gallery, did you not?"

"I moved about somewhat," said he, retreating. "I think, when one is alone, the gallery is best. Good afternoon, Miss Lovering," and he made his way to his aunt's door.

"The snipe!" said Miss Pix, with a vindictive toss of her head, and sitting at the piano, she dashed at a waltz.

"That takes it out of me," she said, jumping up from the piano. "Dear Miss Sally, what should we do without our pianos. We can tell them all our secrets as loudly as we choose, and they are dumb as oracles. What were oracles? I always supposed they were a kind of oyster, till something I saw the other day gave me a misgiving."

"You are an oracle," said Sally, laughing; "especially when you sit on your piano-stool. Good-by, and all manner of thanks for the ticket."

"Bless me! to be sure, and Nicholas forgot to thank me for his. I must go and reprimand him;" and the little woman knocked at her neighbor's door, as her visitor nodded a good-by and closed the street door behind her.

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. Paul Le Clear's philosophy generally bade him take his enjoyment of life leisurely. He was of the opinion that nothing was gained by haste, even in the pursuit of pleasure, and that the wisest course, when happiness seemed to be approaching the zenith, was to retire before one saw any decline. Hence, in following any line of study or reading or æsthetics, he studiously avoided going to extremes; he stopped short of the top of everything, satisfied that the finest enjoyment was to be had on the slope. To pursue the figure back to its suggestion, he had noticed that persons climbing mountains were usually over eager to secure the view which was to be had from the summit, regardless of the fact that the ascent was a deliberate turning of the back upon all the delightful prospects that were steadily revealed to one who would take the trouble to stop and rest; and that those who reached the summit were after all rarely contented, the wider reach of view being not altogether a fair exchange for more secret and fascinating glimpses to be had on the way, while the personal discomfort and fatigue when one had achieved one's object constituted a very serious drawback to the full pleasure of whatever view was to be had from the summit.

Some such train of thought perhaps floated in his mind, as he sat before his fire on the evening after the concert. At any rate his conduct obeyed the impulse

suggested by it. His copper-kettle was simmering on the hob, his little tea-service stood by him on the table, an automatic toaster, requiring but a momentary attention was holding the thin slices of bread, and the demure spoons which seemed to have grown from another variety of the plant which produced his tea-set, lay gleaming on the white cloth. He evidently was enough at his ease to have no special temptation to change his posture.

He was considering whether or no he should go through the process of dressing for a call on Miss Lovering. He certainly had enjoyed the one or two glimpses he had had of her, and espying her in the afternoon at the concert, he had used his walking privileges, which he held in common with other young men in the concert hall, and sought her. It was pleasant to fall into a seat by her side, to walk home with her in the twilight, and to indulge in some of the fancies which had occurred to him from time to time, and which, in default of any great originality, were at least sufficiently struck out from his polite learning to have a certain glitter about them. Miss Lovering was a good listener, and a respectful one, he felt, and there would be an indolent satisfaction in talking with her, all the greater from a freshness and *naïveté* which he thought he saw in her. He wondered how she and crabbed Dr. Chocker lived together, and whether if he called, it would be necessary for him to strain his polite words through the Doctor's dipper. There seemed to be an unnecessary haste in using the privilege so promptly after it had been granted to him. Yet, in the absence of any immediate pursuit, the young man experienced a certain zest in following an acquaintance so agreeably formed; and he owned to himself some curiosity as to a neighbor so distinct from the ordinary inhabitants of the court.

So it came about, that, with more alacrity than he usually displayed, he made ready to seek Miss Lovering. He was ushered into the parlor, and waited the coming of the young lady. The stiff and angular room was relieved a little by apparently hap-hazard decoration. A sudden thought had made a rich piece of silk, brought forth from some old store in the house, serve as a screen to the lower half of a window, whose light fell upon the piano; the old fire-place, disencumbered of its grate, had a curious perforated kettle, hanging from a crane, and containing the smouldering embers of a charcoal fire; upon the white deal door a careless vine was painted, and a coarsely woven rug of oddly assorted carpet ends lay before the fire-place. On the table lay a book, held open by some light work. He read the name, and was conscious of an offering to his vanity when he found it was the Faerie Queene. Just then Miss Lovering entered, and saw him standing at the table.

"You see, I am qualifying myself to appreciate your theory," she said, as she greeted him, and sat down by the table.

"I hardly know how strong a light my theory will bear," said Le Clear, "but it grew out of an accidental reading of Spenser and Homer at the same time, and a comparison of their metres suggested itself to me. I thought I saw in Homer a rhythm which was not exactly imitative, but a reflection of the rise and fall of a boat on the open sea. Let me repeat a few lines to show what I mean." Thereupon he gave a dozen or twenty lines which he had once learned for this purpose. "Don't laugh at my pronunciation, Miss Lovering. I am afraid if your grandfather heard it, he would ask me when I studied Choctaw."

"Well," said Miss Lovering, "I think I did detect

some such rise and fall, but how do I know but you threw it into your recitation. However, I won't be so ungenerous. Here is Spenser. Try his verse by the same rule."

"Ah, but my theory supposes a difference and not a likeness in the two. As Homer's verse borrows its rhythm from the movement of the sea to a sailor in a boat, so Spenser's stanza reflects the same movement of the sea as noticed from the land: the flowing in of the tide, the retreating wave, the poise of the water and the long rolls, all these reappear in his verse."

"Unfortunately for me," said Miss Lovering. "I am as ignorant of the sea, as I am of Greek. I never have seen the ocean, except as I have caught glimpses of it in some of my walks, and I never have been near enough to see the waves or hear the surf. But I like your theory," she added, laughing, "because it is so poetic and so nicely balanced. Did you think of it when you were walking the beach or when you were in a boat."

"Oh, no," said he; "I evolve such things in my study."

"But you have been in a boat?" she asked, looking up.

"Well, you may think it strange, but I believe I never was on the water in my life, but I can easily understand the sensation."

"You will tell me next," she said, with a laugh, "that you never walked on the beach or saw the surf."

"Picking up pebbles of theories, eh?" he rejoined. "But tell me, Miss Lovering, has all your life been passed among the mountains."

"You are not to evade my question, Mr. Le Clear," said she, laying down her work. "When did you last walk by the shore of the sounding sea?"

"When I read the first book of the Iliad."

"And did you have to go back so far to see the ocean?"

"Oh no; there is Tennyson's 'Sea Dreams,' and indeed all the poetry that is to be found in Mr. Longfellow's 'Thalatta.'"

"And do you really get at nature exclusively through books?"

"We seem to be playing at 'Twenty Questions,' Miss Lovering. I think you are entitled to a guess by this time, or else I ought to be carrying on the questioning at the same time, and I should like to ask if that is embroidery that you are at work upon. I have been watching your hand and half discovering the figure."

"I am afraid embroidery would be too fine a word for it," said she, holding up the light cambric on which she was sketching with her needle. "It is a sort of improvisation which an aunt of mine taught me, merely white cambric on which I stitch any figures that I may fancy. It keeps my hands employed when I am reading."

"Somewhat as we may smoke to keep our heads clear, I suppose. But what will it come out finally, an arras?"

"Oh, I am not over anxious about that," said she. "I am a philosopher, too, and consider a certain waywardness and indefiniteness a proper expression of a woman's character."

"And yours goes into cambric?"

"I think your game of 'Twenty Questions' must be nearly through, and that you are entitled to a guess, Mr. Le Clear."

"I will guess that you have sufficient stability to answer in the affirmative when I ask you to let me enjoy some music with you." Miss Lovering laid her work aside and sat at the piano.

"What shall it be?" she asked.

"What, can we range over the whole world of music? Then give me something of Schubert's."

"Ah! Beethoven's wife, as Miss Pix calls him."

"Did Miss Pix discover that title?"

"No, I don't think she did. She repeated it to me once as something said by one of her friends, — Mr. Windgraff, I suspect. 'It is impossible,' he said, 'to tell any one who does n't know music, what the difference is between Beethoven and Schubert, and if one does understand music, then it is enough to say that Schubert is Beethoven's wife.'"

"I should think it also necessary for one to understand, besides music, the relation of husband and wife," said Mr. Le Clear. "Miss Pix ought to discover some musical comparison which would answer to her universal charity. You know, I suppose, Miss Lovering, that Miss Pix is the guardian angel of this court, a sort of *genius loci*, so to speak, and that her unbounded charity takes in all the beggars in intellect or morals, and offers them cold crusts and glasses of water. I have my own private opinion that this court must be a favorite stalking ground for theories and views of all kind, and that Miss Pix is the divinity that presides over our destinies as philosophical creatures. Else how do you account for the erratic performances of that young man whose entrance here has disturbed the old order of things so much? You never heard, I presume, of his sudden apparition to me?"

"No," said Miss Lovering. "I knew of the party that Miss Pix gave. My grandfather has told me of that."

"Oh, it was before the party. It comes back to me now especially, as I find myself in this house. I was just stepping out of my own house to call on your

grandfather when a young man, who ought to have had his eyes about him, but who probably was suffering from some of the hayseed still in his hair, put himself directly in my way, and I nearly jumped him down. That young man, Miss Lovering, was Mr. Judge, who had been here under false pretenses and whom I invited up into my room, where it was easier to have an explanation than it was out of doors. I thought I saw an innocent youth in him, and so I put him before the fire, warmed him with some tea, and before long the sap started and I had a most ingenuous narrative of his early life, and present hopes. You can imagine my amusement when I was invited by Mr. Manlius to Mrs. Blake's and found that he had actually erected this mild young man into a sort of Guy Fawkes or Dr. Rappacinni."

"But what do you mean by his coming here under false pretenses?"

"Oh, that was a short way of saying that he called here to ask if his aunt lived here, and was rather abruptly shown in to your grandfather, who naturally assumed that it was I, whom he had appointed to meet at that hour."

"Why, did you know my grandfather, then?"

"Only by correspondence," said Le Clear, carelessly. "I had written to make some special inquiries in regard to certain studies I was pursuing, in which I knew him to be a proficient."

"Then did you see him?"

"No. I found that, as I said, he had mistaken Judge for me, and I thought it would only annoy him to have me call and explain or be explained to. But come, we have wandered a long way from Beethoven and Beethoven's wife. Shall we not have the music?" Miss Lovering turned again to the piano, and played

both from Schubert and from Beethoven. Mr. Le Clear called for one piece and another, making some slight appreciative comment on each, and occasionally changed his place, standing by the fire-place, or turning her leaves in some rapid piece.

"Do you not play?" she asked. "But I remember you do not, except by proxy on your music-box."

"It would hardly be *de rigeur* for me to invite you to my rooms," said he; "let me bring you my music-box some time. However, it is not unlikely that some mild evening you may hear it, as I sometimes put it in my window seat and open the window so as to get distant effects."

"I think I heard it a night or two ago," said she, "but I should very much like to hear it near by."

"It has its little history," said Le Clear, "but I won't afflict you with it to-night." When he was gone, Sally took up her book again and her work, but laid them aside presently, and sat before the fire-place, from which came a faint sparkle of light. She heard Maria's step and knew thus that her grandfather had left his study for his chamber. She wished she might bid him good-night, but it was now too late for that, and she sat idly until Maria came into the room with her little lamp hung from her wrist.

To remain after that would have so jarred the astronomical severity of Maria's movements, that the girl, dearly as she loved late hours, smiled a good-night and went up-stairs. She opened the window in her room and there came in a tinkling melody which made her draw back and sit in the shadow until it ceased, when she returned and closed the window softly.

CHAPTER XIII.

Miss Lovering's morning intrusions upon her grandfather were so rare that the old gentleman was rather surprised to see her, the next morning, when he had settled himself to work at his table, come in and seat herself on the floor by the fire. He did not speak to her, nor she to him — that was a tacit convention between them, but he continued his work while she plied her needle. At length the girl laid aside her sewing and went to the shelves. She stood before one some time, until her grandfather, requiring a book from the same neighborhood, came and looked over her shoulder.

"Humph!" he ejaculated. "Wrong shelf, Sally. This is Greek. Don't you know Greek when you see it?"

"No, grandfather, and that 's the reason I 'm looking at it."

"You won't learn it by looking at it. Here, take this if you want to learn Greek," and he drew from his shelves a Greek grammar, written in Latin."

"But I don't know Latin," said the young lady, somewhat out of countenance. "Don't you think I had better begin with an English grammar of Latin?"

"Sure you know English, eh? Here, this is what I began my Latin on," and he drew down a forlorn little Eton grammar without a word of English from beginning to end.

"I did think I should like to study Greek," said she, meekly.

"Study Greek?" The old gentleman settled his spectacles well on his nose and looked hard at his rosy granddaughter. His countenance relaxed a little. "No, no, Sally. Let Greek alone. If you undertake to know that, you will have to drop your music and your pictures. You could learn Greek, if you wanted to. But what does *want to* mean? It means to live as I live, eh?" and he looked at her again.

"Will you please read me a little Greek, grandfather. I want to hear how it sounds. Just read me a little Homer. Read it rhythmically," and she looked coaxingly yet rather timidly at the old gentleman.

"Hem," said he, trotting about the room, with his spectacles in his hand. "To think of this! to think of this! Sally, don't be a goose."

"But just read a little, please." Dr. Chocker went to the shelf and took down a Homer.

"You might as well play me a piece of music, Sally, but I'll try ye." He turned over the leaves of the book and finally seemed to find what suited him, when he began to read, casting an eye on his granddaughter.

"Had enough, Sally?"

"A little more, please, and please be very rhythmical." So he went on again in a sing-song tone.

"There!" said he, finally. "How do you like Greek?"

"Well, I suppose there's a difference in pronunciation," said she, dubiously.

"What!"

"You see, grandfather, I've lately met with a theory," Sally hesitated as if the theory might walk into the room and denounce her. "It's a theory of rhythm, as comparing Homer and Spenser." Thereupon she proceeded to decant the theoretic fluid which Le Clear had poured into her mind, into the Doctor's capacious

dipper, fortifying her version with a repetition of two stanzas from the Faerie Queene.

"All through?" asked the old gentleman. "All through?" and he laid his dipper down. "That 's a precious theory, Sally, a precious theory. You did n't find that in any of my books, I warrant, without a green pencil mark against it. Oh, these theorists, these theorists," and the scholar trotted about the room fuming. "It 's a piece of nonsense, Sally, not worth the paper it 's written on. Show me the book that holds it."

"I heard it in conversation," said Sally, a little alarmed at the vindictive spirit her grandfather showed, as he seemed to hold a writ against the unfortunate little theory.

"And who 's been talking such precious nonsense to you? Don't listen to such talk, Sally. It will poison your mind. Here have I been working for ten years, off and on, on the metres, and along comes some jackanapes with his little dandy theory; bah!" Miss Lovering discreetly covered herself from this invective with her work, which she held up as a shield against her grandfather.

"You need n't laugh, child," and then his own face relaxed. "The fact is," said he, tweaking her ear affectionately, "that was n't Greek that I read. I made up a hodge podge to see if you knew anything about it. Did n't you think it was rhythmical, eh?" and he chuckled to himself, and soon began burrowing in his work again. His granddaughter soon slipped out of the room, and went back to her piano.

"At least I know what is genuine in music," she said to herself. She went to the window to raise the shade, and as she did so, looked out into the court and noticed Mr. Nicholas Judge walking away from his aunt's house. It was several days since she had seen

Mrs. Blake, and being of a somewhat vagabond as well as willful mood this morning, she suddenly resolved to visit her imprisoned neighbor. With Mrs. Blake she held some things in common, which rarely seemed to be shared by her with other acquaintances. Something in the whiteness and perfect repose of that lady's chamber accorded with the dignity and sweetness in which she herself had been nurtured in the home of her maiden aunts. Moreover, Mrs. Blake, while possessing a nature instinctively refined and cultivated by education, owed her contentment and ease to the higher ministrations of a religious trust, which spread over her an air of calm and patience, inexpressibly soothing to one at all inclined to restlessness. Miss Pix used to say that when she herself was tired, going to see Mrs. Blake was much better than going to church, for you never heard a sermon, yet came away as if you had been preached to and converted.

It was the middle of the forenoon when Miss Lovering entered Mrs. Blake's chamber. Mrs. Starkey was there also, but after a few minutes rose and slipped away, so like a shadow, that it was some time before Miss Lovering perceived that she was gone.

"How fragrant your rose is, Mrs. Blake," she said, bending over a single spray that stood in a glass on the table. "I am tempted to think there is something perpetual about it, since I never come here but I find it always fresh and always red."

"That is my nephew's fancy," said Mrs. Blake. "He said this room was so white that he wanted a single spot of color, and that the air was always so sweet that he wanted to emphasize it with a single bit of fragrance. You see, living here so many years, I have been gradually compelled to the whiteness and the sweetness. I used to amuse myself with planning changes

in the furniture and the general dress of the room; then I got very tired of variety, and little by little I dismissed one thing after another, until finally my eyes could seem to find nothing satisfactory but pure white. I think very possibly it may be a mere whim of my own; indeed I am quite certain that to many invalids unvarying white would be distressing, but it has come to be second nature with me. Then I had an almost morbid horror of confined and close rooms. I had been in them when the persons lying there were wholly unconscious of the deadness of the air, so when I found myself imprisoned, I was resolved that I would secure the most perfect ventilation. I used to ask my friends the most rigid questions, when they came to see me, to determine whether they perceived anything disagreeable in the air, but as I sometimes did, when they, coming from out of doors did not, I came to think that the sense of smell had been exceptionally developed in me. But I do not dislike the red rose, though I am so foolish that it has to be carried away before others think it drooping. I seem to perceive the first intimation of its loss of health. Nicholas has tried chemical experiments here to determine the purity of the air, and gravely announces that I have the standard of pure air. It amuses me to regulate it. I have tried all sorts of experiments. That earthen vessel is my hygrometer, as Nicholas calls it, and I have found how to secure the requisite moisture by the simple use of water. So the room has come to be a sort of dress that I wear, which I never suffer to become too tight or too loose. But don't fancy that I have to give all my attention to it; it has become an instinct, I suppose. Will you kindly put a piece of maple on the fire. No, my dear, that is hickory. There, that is right. Is it possible that you lived long in the country and do not know the difference between hickory and maple?"

"I know them with their bark on, and growing," said Miss Lovering, laughing.

"I have not forgotten the maples that I saw at Kingston more than twenty years ago," said Mrs. Blake. "There were some that stood in a little valley to the east of Round Top and took on the most lovely hues in autumn."

"Oh, I know those," cried Sally. "They were always the first to change, and every fall I used to watch for their color. We had a way of going there on my birthday, and it seemed as if they always had a flaming branch just ready for me."

"And were there not some maples also near the church? I seem to remember looking out of the window on some?"

"Yes, there were. When I was a little girl I used to look at their bright leaves through the window and try to imagine how painted windows in great cathedrals must look."

"Well, have you found windows more beautiful in any of the churches here?"

"I suppose I am getting over my first feeling of disappointment. The windows were not as lovely as I dreamt them to be, but I am gradually learning to find their own beauty in them."

"Perhaps my whiteness of eye prevents my liking them," said Mrs. Blake, with a smile, "and indeed I have to remind myself constantly that I am judging what I have not seen for a long time and only remember. But I live in such a little room and have so few things about me, that it sometimes seems as if I had been all these years trying to sweep and dust my mind, until I had got rid of a good deal that was picturesque in sentiment. I have come to like simplicity, but I am by no means certain that simplicity is the only or even the

best condition. Once in a while I find myself sighing, for instance, for a choral service. I never was present at one, yet I can fancy what it might be, and I am very sure that certain parts of the service must gain immensely from the color which music gives. My nephew has a theory that the real harmonies of color and sound will one day be so far reduced to rule, that splendid effects will be produced by very simple means, and I suppose we are on our way to that theory when we hear a processional hymn and see the procession at the same time, or see a company of soldiers marching to the sound of martial music."

"Do you not miss being away from church?" asked the girl, timidly.

"As I miss everything else that is good," said Mrs. Blake, smiling; "and find something in its place that contents me. I have to bring everything to me, you know, and so I must make my congregation also. But I suppose there are few congregations that are quite as select as mine. A good deal of my reading is in history and biography, and so I have what I call my parochial list, and out of it I gather my fellow-worshipers. I suppose it is something like playing at going to church. Last Wednesday, you know, was Ash Wednesday, and before I read the service I gathered about me such a collection of penitents as made me, I will confess, feel a little alarmed. There was King David to begin with, the Apostle Peter, the woman who was a sinner, Simon Magus, St. Augustine, Archbishop Cranmer, Henry Vaughan, John Winthrop, Dr. Samuel Johnson, all most excellent people, and it gave me great comfort to make my confession in company with them, though, as I said, I felt for a moment a trifle uneasy lest I should have the pride of a sweet humility." Mrs. Blake laughed a low laugh as she looked

at her visitor's perplexed face. "Do not think I am making fun of it all, child. But I have led so very solitary a life here that it has become a second nature to me to make real the persons I read about, and I have acquired the habit of holding them in my imagination so firmly that I believe I am quite as positively affected by their presence, as some are by those whom they touch and see. When I chant the *Te Deum,* in the pause after 'the glorious company of the Apostles praise thee,' they all seem to rise to my eyes, and I have individualized them so much, that once I believe I actually missed St. Thomas. Ah, I have sometimes wished I were a painter: it seems to me that I could paint that glorious company of the Apostles. I suppose that my little room answers somewhat the purpose of Fra Angelico's cell, only I am not Fra Angelico."

"I should think living people would seem like ghosts to you, if ghosts have come to life here," said Miss Lovering.

"Do people when you wake seem like the real persons of whom you dreamt?" asked Mrs. Blake. "My ghosts come at my bidding."

"May a ghost come in, then?" asked a voice in the passage. The door was ajar and Nicholas Judge pushed it open, as his aunt answered, —

"Come in, good ghost."

"Excuse me, I thought it was Miss Pix." But he did not go immediately. "I have been off on a voyage of discovery, aunt. Did you ever visit the tall chimney, by Stony brook, Miss Lovering?"

"I have only seen it in the distance."

"I had a fancy to see it from what I had heard, and walked out there this morning. It looks even more impressive near by; there are no buildings immediately

around it. It was the chimney of some chemical works which were destroyed some time ago. It stands on the top of a rough hill, and I picked my way to it over the *débris* of the ruined buildings. It looked very high and very rough from below; great seams ran up the surface and an old lightning rod appeared in detached portions. But the strangest part was the interior. There are a couple of narrow openings about ten feet high that let one into the inside, which is about twenty feet in diameter I should say. It looked strangely enough in there, the darkness beginning a very little way above one, and the round opening at the top showing a clear circle of sky, but the light did not seem to penetrate the chimney except at the side openings on the ground. I sounded an echo, — at once the chimney caught it up and the sound went beating back and forth, as if it were a bird flying against the walls and finally disappearing at the top. Shrill notes and whistles could scarely be heard; the full notes echoed very finely. There was a remarkable leap to the sound, and double notes, notes given in quick succession, were repeated with great distinctness. It was the most extraordinary echo I ever heard. You should hear it, Miss Lovering."

"I should like to. But I must bid you good-morning now, Mrs. Blake. I am sure I must have kept away some spiritual visitors."

"Ah, my dear, I like flesh and blood best, and I only like my ghosts when I can seem to have them alive. Come often, please."

"You never knew Miss Lovering in Kingston, Nicholas, I think you said," Mrs. Blake continued to her nephew, when the young lady had left them.

"I used to see her at church and occasionally elsewhere," said he, "but I never spoke to her. It was a

great surprise to me to find she was here and a granddaughter of Dr. Chocker. I knew one of her aunts a little. She was one of the few who ever said much to me."

"Miss Lovering has told me about her aunts," said Mrs. Blake, "and I think I should like to know them. What were their names?"

"They were Miss Miriam and Miss Rebecca."

"How old were they?"

"Miss Miriam, I should think, was sixty, and her sister two years younger."

"Light, or dark?"

"Miss Miriam was rather fair and had gray eyes. Her hair was gray, and she always dressed in a dark brown, rather stiff sort of stuff. Miss Rebecca was more timid in her appearance; but she had a sharp nose, and the end of it moved."

"What!"

"The end of it moved. I used to sit in church where I could see them, and I used to notice Miss Rebecca's nose."

"Nicholas, we won't talk about Miss Rebecca's nose. It 's too personal. Did either of them look like their niece?"

"I used to think Miss Miriam looked like her. She had just the same decided way, too, that Miss Sally Lovering has. I used to wonder if Miss Sally would look like her when she was old."

"Well, well, thank you, Nicholas. I begin to see them," and Mrs. Blake, from these rather indefinite data, began to frame in her mind the two ancient maidens; yet, as the young girl constantly came up before her eyes and shaded off into her elder aunt, it is probable that her imagination, like that of her nephew, found its most substantial support in the actuality of the visible Miss Lovering.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was something more than a coincidence that Nicholas Judge had his seat in church in the city where he could see the niece of Misses Lovering. Perhaps the same charm drew him to the little church which he frequented, as acted upon Miss Lovering, but it is quite certain that the attraction to him was a steadfast one. He had chosen his seat where his eyes, raised to the preacher, could fall with ease upon the young girl whose form carried so much of pleasant suggestion to him. Possibly this weekly study of Miss Lovering's hat, shoulders, and back, lay at the basis of his confident knowledge when he climbed the hill behind her. At any rate, though he did not probe his own mind too far, he was aware of the satisfaction with which his eyes rested on her as he listened to sermon or lessons. He learned to know a certain curve in the side of her face, which did not permit him to see her eye, but only showed where the eye would be seen, if the face were turned a trifle more. It was a contour line of real beauty to him. He never had attempted to sketch Miss Lovering. He did not draw at all, yet often, when sitting alone in his laboratory, his pencil had traced the line, and he found himself comparing it with similar contours that appeared to him elsewhere; it was a pleasant discovery that this line differed in all faces, simple as it was, and he was able to convince himself, after many comparisons, that he should know

it wherever he saw it, so individual had it become to him. He once found certain studies in carbon photographs, of old masters, and though he had little knowledge of art, he was quick to see how much this line had been studied by the great painters.

It was certainly but knowing a person on the horizon only, so to speak, to become familiar chiefly with this facial line, yet the imagination often builds most completely upon some such simple base. Nicholas used, when service was over, to pass out without seeking a further glimpse and without asking for any recognition from her.

It cannot be said that Miss Lovering had acquired any special knowledge of the young man as seen from behind, but her advantages had not been so good. She caught sight of him once or twice in the congregation, as it moved slowly toward the door, and she was conscious of retarding her own movements a little to avoid any possible encounter in the porch; but her precaution was unnecessary. Her neighbor did not wait for her, or linger on the way home, and the apprehension which she at first felt was quieted and indeed disappeared wholly, giving place to a certain indistinct recognition of his delicacy. Once, coming upon him unexpectedly when he had been detained by an acquaintance near the church door, she gave him a hurried bow, and the young man, as he walked home, keeping his eye on her graceful figure before him, measuring his face by hers, found something in the bow which he was obliged to confess in franker mood was never deposited in it by the giver. But after this, making use of a slight manœuvre, he delayed his own return, making a detour of streets which brought him presently a suitable distance behind her, so that he could enjoy in his walk something of the pleasure which blended with his morning worship.

On the Sunday after Miss Lovering's visit to his aunt, Nicholas took his customary place, yet something had gone out of the satisfaction which he had been used to have in his half-dreamy attention, and he tried to persuade himself that it was less in his own somewhat uneasy mind, than in the restlessness of Miss Lovering, who had lost so much of her wonted quiet, that he was almost ready to believe that his long continued gaze had at length penetrated her in some mysterious fashion, and rendered her conscious that she was being gazed upon. So much did this uneasy feeling affect him that he shifted his own position, and by an effort hid himself from seeing her. But after service he made his customary detour, and coming again upon the main street, discovered Miss Lovering before him, and with her, a companion whom he saw to be his neighbor, Le Clear. The apparition was not a quieting one, but it held his attention quite as much as the solitary figure had been wont to hold it. He watched the two as they walked, and if he interpreted the dumb show of their gestures and movements, it was only to see that they held an animated conversation. He had conceived a dislike for Le Clear upon sufficient grounds furnished by that neighbor himself, and certainly his dislike was easily reënforced by what he was pleased to think the insolent ease of the young man as he inclined his head to his companion and looked with an amused air on her.

Nicholas loitered by the way, but as they came near the court, suddenly quickened his gait, and turning into the place just behind the pair, stood upon his own doorstep as Miss Lovering turned upon hers to bid her neighbor good-by. He caught her eye, as he poked the key abstractedly into its opening, and bowed awkwardly; the girl replied with what seemed to be the

remains of a smile just given to some word of Le Clear's, who was still lingering on the step.

The recluse life which Nicholas Judge had led in Kingston, and the scarcely more social experience which he had enjoyed in the city, had so far formed his habits that it was both easier and, abstractly considered, more agreeable to enjoy the perfume, so to speak, of a human flower like Miss Lovering, at a gentle distance, suffering it to come in unsuspected ways, or indulging in such approaches as could scarcely betray to the flower itself his secret pleasure; but the young man was not so ignorant, or so careless, as to suppose that he could float along upon a stream of his own imagination and find himself suddenly advantageously near the object of his hopes. He ate his dinner in silence and sat alone in his room, but suddenly, upon an impulse which he was fain to refer to that class of personal revelations which have a destiny in them, he dressed himself and went over to Dr. Chocker's house.

He had never called on Miss Lovering, nor indeed asked if he might, — heretofore he had rather dallied with the pleasure of the acquaintance than resolutely grasped it with a purpose. He sent up a card on which he wrote, "Will Miss Lovering let Mr. Judge show her the chimney this afternoon. The echo is at its best." He remained where Maria unceremoniously left him, in the dark passage, until she returned with Miss Lovering's card. "I am very sorry I must decline, but I have accepted another invitation." Nicholas put the card in his pocket and walked away.

"It was a weak performance," he said to himself; "Why did I not ask to see her!" but he knew very well that he felt more confidence in his ability to write a short sentence on his card, than to do so simple a thing as ask Miss Lovering to walk with him. He

walked away from the court and tried to outwalk the feeling of having been rebuffed, — a feeling which was in advance of other feelings when he left Dr. Chocker's house. His walk took him countryward, and he chose for the end of it a ledge of rocks which he had often visited, called Tommy's Rocks and enjoying a somewhat nebulous tradition of having been the hiding-place of a certain Tommy, who was variously represented, according to the imagination of the story-teller as a burglar, a pirate, a miser, a hermit, and a disappointed lover. The ledge was a rough place surrounded by suburban lanes that straggled toward it with houses that had the air of intending, when they grew stronger, to climb the hill; footpaths rambled over it, and one or two shanties had been planted upon it by adventurous pioneers. Tommy himself had long since left his rocks. The charm of the place was in its scraggy contrast to the refinement about it, and in the extensive view which it commanded. The afternoon was a bright anticipation of the spring that was not yet quite due. Nicholas found a dry rock upon which he sat half reclining, and looking off upon the country which stretched beyond. A path ran a little below him, and every now and then small companies of people would pass along it, bearing little twigs or other trophies, as if they were so many doves, shut up during the winter, now trying the world of out-doors and carrying back olive branches of hope to those who might doubt the actual coming of spring. He watched the groups, when suddenly he heard familiar voices and then he saw Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff strolling along the path. He picked up a pebble to toss at them, then withdrew his hand and watched them move down the rough slope. He followed them with his eye and saw the German give Miss Pix his hand, that she might jump down the occasional steps

that came in the path. They passed beyond his sight, and he rose to see them again, and when they again disappeared, he gathered himself together and also went down the ledge into the road. He remembered the chimney and thought he would take it on his way home. It was not very far from Tommy's Rocks, and as he followed the road he met little groups all along the way. It was evident that the charm of the afternoon had drawn many out of doors, and as evening drew near, they were making their way homeward. Some of the groups came from the chimney itself, as he perceived, for he was not the only one who had discovered the singular ruin, and as he entered the field in which it stood, he saw one and another coming away. A single house stood at the outer edge of the field. The great height of the chimney seemed to have been measured by the eye and no one had ventured to live within the range of its possible fall. Nicholas scrambled over the loose stones and as he came to the opening he heard voices within. He could not hear the echo, but he stepped through the rude arched entrance and at that moment heard echoes flying upward to the little opening above. There were two persons there and in the dusky shade he did not at first recognize them. He was himself more quickly perceived by those whose eyes had grown accustomed to the shadow, and he heard his name called. In a moment, "Mr. Judge" went springing up the chimney, losing its articulate form as it rose and followed by little laughs that came out spontaneously at the unpremeditated effect.

"Oh, Miss Lovering, Mr. Le Clear," said Nicholas, and these names, also confusedly blended, knocked, fluttering, against the sides of the chimney and grew faint in the distance. They all remained a few moments more in the chimney, uttering such sounds as occurred to

them, but giving up any idea of conversation, so distracting was the effect. Nicholas was the first to leave, and the others followed at once.

"The whole court pretty much has been here," said Le Clear. "Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff left just before you came. You met them, I suppose?"

"Not here," said Nicholas. "I saw them some time ago on Tommy's Rocks. I did not know they were coming here."

"Miss Lovering, I suspect, was the moving cause of our all coming here. At any rate, I heard of it from her."

"Mr. Judge himself told me of it," said Miss Lovering, who stood with her skirts gathered in her hand, as if impatient to go.

"Ah," said Le Clear, raising his eyebrows. "Have you been performing experiments here, Mr. Judge? But there is not much left of the day," and he gave Miss Lovering his hand to help her down the steep descent. She turned and looked at Nicholas.

"Good evening," said he. "I am going to try another way home," and turning away he went a little higher up. He could see the two figures rapidly descending the slope. They left the field and entered the road which would carry them quite directly back to Five-Sisters Court. For himself, he felt in no haste. He lingered about the chimney. He entered it again and tried the echoes once more. Then he found another way out of the field and strolled by a roundabout way back to the city. The darkness came on, the street lamps were lighted, and as he heard again the noise of cars and wagons and coaches, and was shut in by houses, he felt a strong desire to get away from the city and go back to Kingston. He was oppressed by the city, and the touch of spring which the day had

held seemed to bring the outline of Round Top very close.

As he opened the door to his aunt's house, what was his surprise at seeing Miss Lovering upon the other side just preparing to leave.

"Oh, Mr. Judge," said she. "I am so glad you have come." There was a look of trouble in her face, and she went on with trembling voice: "Your aunt has been taken suddenly ill." Nicholas started to pass her, then stopped and impulsively took her hand.

"She sent for you? You were going for me?"

"She does not know," whispered the girl. "Hannah was away. Mrs. Starkey went to find Miss Pix; she was out also. She came then for me, just as I had reached home, and I came here. I was going for a doctor. Do let me go for him, while you go to Mrs. Blake."

"Stay a moment, here, Miss Lovering," said Nicholas, and he hurried up-stairs. Mrs. Starkey was in his aunt's room. The windows had been thrown open as if to bring in more air. Mrs. Blake lay in her bed, motionless, while Mrs. Starkey was sitting patiently at the bedside, watching for any sign. Nicholas looked at his aunt, listened to her breathing, and then leaving the room, beckoned Mrs. Starkey to him.

"When was it?" he asked.

"An hour or less ago. I was reading to her and she had been speaking, when suddenly her voice grew thick and then stopped altogether. I did not know what to do. No one was in the house but myself. At length I left her and ran to Miss Pix, but she was not at home. I sent Gretchen for Miss Lovering, and she was not in. Then I waited. Then I asked Gretchen to stay while I ran to see Dr. Chocker. That time Miss Lovering had just come in. She came and opened the window and said she would go for the doctor."

"I am going myself," said Nicholas, "but I will ask Miss Lovering to stay with you." He went down again and found Miss Lovering waiting where he had left her. She looked up at him anxiously.

"I think it is paralysis," said he; "I am going for the doctor, but will you stay with Mrs. Starkey?"

"Willingly," said she, "or I will go to the doctor's. Really I would, it is not very dark."

"Thank you," said Nicholas, "you are very good. I will ask you to stay here." At this moment Hannah appeared in the door-way.

"It is not necessary now that you should stay," said he, hurriedly, "yet if you would" — She began to remove her hat. Nicholas explained to Hannah briefly that his aunt was seriously ill, that Miss Lovering would stay with Mrs. Starkey, and that she was to remain near the door ready to answer any call which might be made upon her. Then he went quickly for his aunt's doctor, who promised to call without delay. Nicholas did not wait for him; he was in no mood for talk, and as he returned, he scarcely knew why he lingered by the way, and even increased the length of his walk. He was dimly conscious of a sense of satisfaction in knowing that the young girl who had been so much in his mind that day, was sitting in his house, by the bedside of his aunt. It was a strange mixture of feelings which possessed him. He was almost angry with himself that he should suffer any personal pleasure to crowd out the thought of the invalid lying helpless, yet he returned again and again to the waking dream which had, almost unknown to him, gained, little by little, a very full ascendency over him. It was the sense of this reality in his own mind which now affected him strangely. It was as if he had thrown aside any disguise in which he had been concealing his imagina-

tion from his reason, and had frankly admitted his entire mind to a participation in his secret. In vain his reason whispered its little protest that Miss Lovering's kindness and apparent docility were but the generous impulse of a girl appealed to suddenly in a time of trouble; he refused at this hour to suffer any doubt, and as if to intrench himself more firmly, he excluded the last scene from his thought and fell back on his own long, patient, and silent admiration of the girl which had gained such volume that he could no longer resist it.

He reached the court again just as the physician entered it, and they passed into the house together, and up-stairs. Mrs. Starkey and Miss Lovering withdrew from the room. Nicholas did not enter it, but followed Miss Lovering as she passed down-stairs.

"Let us wait here for the doctor," said he; and they stood where he had left her when she took his place with his aunt. The passage was dimly lighted only, and Miss Lovering, sitting upon the stair, could not perceive the ardent look with which the young man, leaning against the rail, regarded her, while he, shading his eyes, could see every expression of her figure, and even catch something of the look in her face.

"Has she moved since I went?" he asked, in a low voice.

"No. She has breathed heavily but steadily."

"Did it not seem a long time before the doctor came?"

"Yes; very long. I wanted Mrs. Starkey to lie down, but she would not."

"You are very good. And yet" — he hesitated, as if embarrassed by possible misconstruction of his words — "there is something in sickness or trouble which always makes one thoughtful of others." There was the least perceptible smile on Miss Lovering's face.

"Your aunt has been more than kind to me," she said. "Indeed, I can remember when, years ago, I was at my grandfather's for a few months, she let me come to see her and told me stories."

"She told me that herself," said Nicholas, eagerly. "She told me before you came this time, and it was a great delight to her to see you again." The doctor at this moment came down the stairs, and Miss Lovering rose. He was a silent man who rarely gave his patients or their attendants any explanation, but only instructions which they were to follow implicitly. He presumed Mrs. Blake to have had an attack of paralysis; he would be in again, later in the evening, and meanwhile he gave a few directions as to the care to be taken. Miss Lovering took her hat and cloak, when he had gone, and made ready to follow.

"It is only a step," she said, as she saw Nicholas preparing to attend her.

"Then the less of a favor to me," said he, smiling. Indeed the walk across the court was so short that the young man had said nothing when they reached Dr. Chocker's door. He held out his hand.

"If I can be of any further use" — said Miss Lovering.

"I shall not hesitate to ask your help," said he finishing her sentence in his own words. "You have been of the greatest use already to my aunt — and to me. May I come to tell you how she is in the morning?"

"You may not be able to leave her."

"If I am not, you will know how much worse she is."

But Mrs. Blake remained the same throughout the night and the next morning. She was very still, and she had the use of her hand though she could not speak.

Nicholas told her, at her request, in a few words, what had passed the night before and added, —

"I told Miss Lovering I would let her know how you were this morning." Mrs. Blake motioned for paper and pencil, and with difficulty wrote the words — "I send you my morning rose. E. B." Nicholas took the writing, and stooping over, kissed his aunt and left the house. When he asked for Miss Lovering at her grandfather's house, he at that moment heard her voice above, singing at her piano. Maria told him in her abrupt way, "She 's in the parlor," and ignoring his hesitation, turned her back upon him, leaving him to find his way, an easy matter for him, acquainted as he was with the common plan of this house and his aunt's.

When he entered the parlor Miss Lovering was still seated at the instrument. With a secret which he was not ready to confide to her, he could yet discover a new pleasure for himself in each fresh encounter. In his own mind it was much as if he were an accepted lover, not from any over confidence on his part, but because he had frankly admitted to himself that there could no longer be any reason to conceal the fact of his admiration from himself. When he saw her therefore now in her morning dress, it was with a new delight. He reached forth his hand to her.

"My aunt is not worse, at any rate," he said. "See, she has sent you her rose," and he placed the rose-bud in her hand, with his aunt's cramped message wrapped about the stem.

"But she will miss her rose, I am afraid. She spoke of it so pleasantly to me the other day."

"She has so delicate a sense of smell," said Nicholas, "that perhaps she will be reminded of it now and then during the day, and will perceive where it is." Miss Lovering went to a vase and placed her rose in it, — so doing discovered the writing on the paper.

"Ah," said she, "she really cared so much as to send a special message. Can you take one in return?" She reflected a moment.

"I can carry words," said Nicholas, "and even parcels. I assure you I am excellent at carrying parcels."

"Oh, I was not doubting your ability," she laughed. "I was thinking how little there was one could send your aunt."

"If you could send her a piece of pure whiteness, now," said Nicholas, "I know nothing else that would please her so much."

"It would take a little time," said Miss Lovering.

"I shall be happy to wait."

"Then if you will sit down, I will try." She took a bit of fine cambric and some white silk and began deftly sketching with her needle, while Nicholas looked on with admiration.

"You make me think of a story I once read called 'The Emperor's New Clothes,'" said he. "Perhaps you know it? Your cambric and silk are almost invisible, and I may admire the web to my heart's content."

"Or be in danger of being counted unfit for your place?" she added, looking up.

"There would be some uncertainty what place I filled beyond that of a dutiful nephew, and I do not mean to be driven out of that. I confess, though, that yesterday afternoon, I did cherish an almost traitorous notion of deserting my aunt; the country looked very enchanting to me."

"I feel something of the same creaking of the wings," said she. "I have been told that when I was here as a child I behaved very well through the winter, but when spring came, I began to droop, and needed the country air to revive me. But I suppose I have more self-control now."

"I do not believe it is something over which we have entire control. For my part I feel the daily walk I take into the country as a necessity; when I miss it, something has gone out of the day."

"But you cannot go very far into the country."

"Far enough to leave the city behind, and that is the main thing. It is like stepping out of doors. One does not need to go much beyond his door in the country to get a draught of fresh air. Here, I am not sure that I am breathing until I have left the pavement behind."

"Why then did you come to the city at all, Mr. Judge?" Nicholas was silent a moment.

"I came for the same reason that keeps me — a need of human companionship. When my father died, although I knew scarcely any one in Kingston, I felt unutterably lonely. Pardon me for speaking of my own affairs, but I cannot help remembering that it was a single kind word of your aunt, Miss Miriam Lovering, that gave me the impulse to come here. Then, besides, I suppose I had an honest desire to see the city, and realize some of my fancies regarding it. I was restless, and I suppose I am still, and that this is the reason, in part, why I thought yesterday I should like to go back. But I know very well I do not want to go back."

"And does the city give you all that you expected?"

"Yes, and some things I had not looked for. What surprises me is that it is not the new things which interest me most, but whatever reminds me of my old home. I saw a picture the other day, of Round Top, and I stood before it for an hour. I think it was a good picture; at any rate I know I learned more about pictures from it than I have ever been able to learn from the visits I have made to different collections and picture stores. It is so with church. I fancied a homely

sort of likeness between the St. John's of Kingston, and the St. John's here, beside the mere identity of names, and so I have contentedly continued there, in spite of what might be called greater attractions elsewhere."

"I felt the likeness, too," said Miss Lovering, looking up with real pleasure; "and so I have been there."

"I have noticed you there," said Nicholas, contenting himself with so diffident a statement of his weekly unremitting gaze. "But after all, what gives the city its chief interest to me aside from these personal matters, is the multitude of people. I am nothing to them and they are nothing to me, so I can look at them and watch them to my heart's content. At home the few people whom I saw thought they knew all about me, and I had settled impressions concerning each one, and I felt under restraint. Perhaps if I had known them it might have been different. I read my books, but since I came to the city books have seemed a little unreal. I don't believe they can be enjoyed in a city so thoroughly as in the country. I believe if I wrote books or read them much I should live in a cell. They seem to drive out human companionship."

"Don't you think they help to bring people together?"

"No, I do not. People fancy they do. They think because they read the same books, that they have a certain common taste, but people do not really come together on that ground. That is a sort of false bottom on which most people are content to rest. They hear and like the same music, look at the same pictures, read the same books, and fancy that they are now in sympathy with each other, but really all these things prevent them from finding a real, substantial community. It is the way people act toward one another in emergencies, or the way they have of doing the same things

which show whether they are like one another or not. Then they can afford to differ in matters of taste. But I can think of no greater misery than for two people to think they care for each other because their tastes agree, and suddenly to discover that their natures are really antagonistic; that one, for example, is wholly selfish, the other wholly forgetful of self. But how oracularly I am talking. May I see what figure is climbing over that cambric?" Miss Lovering gave him her work, and he held it carefully.

"It is sweet pea, is it not?"

"Yes, it is; you quite encourage me by discovering the likeness, especially as there is no color in my sketch, a white sweet pea vine on a white ground is not remarkably near to nature."

"What made you choose this flower?" he asked.

"I generally take the first subject that occurs to me," said she.

"And you happened to think of Miss Lovering's garden in front of the house?"

"Yes," said she, in great surprise.

"And of your last summer's hat?" Her face clouded; then she laughed.

"Do you think that all our ideas of nature are connected with millinery?"

"I don't think the transition in this case was a very violent one. But you have chosen a special favorite of my aunt's." He made haste to get away from so daring a revelation as that he had seen and taken note of Miss Lovering's last summer's hat. "She was speaking of the flower to me the other day."

"It is done now," said Miss Lovering. "It is perfectly useless, Mr. Judge, to try to discover any moral value or practical advantage in this little bit of cambric. It is as mere a piece of folly as sweet peas in a summer

hat, if you ever saw such. It has no mortal significance except as a token of my affection for Mrs. Blake. So if you will take it to her with my love, its whole mission will be accomplished." The young man took it, and looked it over curiously.

"Do you regard it as so undemonstrative that I must add your love to it, when I give it to my aunt? I think you called it a token of affection. But I will carry both safely," and he placed the cambric in his waistcoat pocket. As he was about leaving, Dr. Chocker, who moved about in noiseless carpet slippers, suddenly appeared in the door-way.

"Hey, hey," said he; "how 's your aunt? Your real aunt, I mean."

"She is able to use her hand, but not her voice," said he, "and I think the doctor seems a little encouraged."

"You did n't treat her to some of your mixtures, did you? that 's what Manlius would have said."

"I have not such a superabundance of friends, that I wish to get rid of any," said Nicholas, bidding good-morning.

"I like that young man, Sally," said her grandfather, when Nicholas had left. "He 's green, but he 's fresh, too. Now where is my pocket handkerchief. I 've been hunting all over the house for it. It is n't in this chest is it? what is this? I never saw this before."

"It 's a music-box," said his granddaughter.

"What! plays all by itself! that 's no music. Where did you get it?"

"It 's not mine, grandfather. It was lent to me by our next door neighbor, Mr. Le Clear."

"H'm. Does he get his music ground? He's too lazy, is n't he, to play himself?"

"Oh, the music is n't much," said Sally; "but I like to hear the tinkle of it."

"Stick to your piano, Sally," said the old gentleman, who had found his handkerchief, and was toddling off. "Stick to your piano. There is n't much in the music, but the practice is good for something."

CHAPTER XV.

Mr. Le Clear himself, by some chance, did not put himself in the way of Dr. Chocker's animadversions, which fell exclusively upon the young man's innocent music-box. He found it an easy pleasure to spend the evening with Miss Lovering. He discovered that she was almost sure to be at home at that time, and alone. He could hear her at her piano, and it came to be a signal to him which he obeyed with cheerful alacrity. He lent her his books and engravings, and it seemed to Miss Lovering that she never expressed an interest in any matter of art, or literature, or music, but Mr. Le Clear was reminded of some little thing which he had that illustrated it; and the next day, the book with a leaf turned down, or a photograph, or an autograph letter would come, to be recalled by the owner when he came himself in the evening.

It was not long after this that Mr. Le Clear was discoursing upon some book illustrations which had recently appeared, and were a touchstone, in his estimation, of the artistic taste of those who looked at them.

"Just let me run to my room a moment," said he, "and bring a little book I have which shows the first poetry and philosophy and pictures of the men who have made this school what it is." When he returned with a copy of "The Germ" in his hand, he was annoyed to find an interloper present in the person of Mr. Judge, who had come to bring Miss Lovering the latest

report of his aunt's condition, as he averred. Mr. Le Clear sat turning the leaves of his book, and waiting, apparently, for his neighbor to dispatch his errand and leave.

"Mr. Le Clear has been expounding the principles of the Pre-Rafaelites to me," said Miss Lovering, "and had just gone for an illustration of their work when you came in."

"I am so ignorant as to know nothing of the Pre-Rafaelites," said Nicholas. "The name sounds like that of some theological sect. Who was Prerafael?" Miss Lovering laughed.

"I am afraid you will have to begin at first principles with Mr. Judge, Mr. Le Clear; and I am sure nothing could be more in harmony with the Prerafaelite school."

"I beg to be excused from giving any lecture on art," said Le Clear, "especially of an elementary character."

"You believe, then," she asked, "that to understand art one must be initiated?"

"He must have some knowledge of what a picture undertakes to tell. If it is a historical picture, and he knows nothing of history, I don't see what he can find in it to enjoy. If it is a landscape, to be sure, he does n't require any particular knowledge."

"Why does not the same rule apply?" asked Nicholas. "A person may have looked on a certain part of the country a hundred times, but for all that he may never have seen it. An artist, I suppose, sees it at once and puts it into his picture, and there any one will find it over again who has seen the same thing in nature, but he need not have seen that particular subject, and he may have looked at that scene a hundred times, and be able to recognize the spot when the pict-

ure is placed before him, but he won't see it any more in the picture than he did in nature, if he did not see it there in the first place."

"I will resign my post of lecturer on the fine arts to Mr. Judge, Miss Lovering."

"Oh, I know nothing of these things," said Nicholas. "I am only saying what came into my head as I looked at a picture I saw the other day of a scene which was familiar to me. There were certain shadows in it which were perfectly true. I knew just what hour of the day the picture was painted, for I had seen those same shadows and watched them change."

"See what it is to be observing!" exclaimed Miss Lovering. "Now, often as I have been to Miss Pix's I do not believe I could draw or describe the pattern of the carpet on the floor of her parlor. What is it, Mr. Le Clear?"

"It is an arabesque, is n't it?"

"It is an oak-leaf pattern," said Nicholas Judge, "with acorns sprinkled in."

"Yes, I think it is," said Miss Lovering.

"I have been but twice to Miss Pix's," said Le Clear, "and neither time did I have any occasion to look down."

"I suppose I must have noticed the carpet when I was listening to music," said Nicholas.

"When you were trying to find a harmony between the colors and the sound?" asked Miss Lovering, looking up from her work, and then applying herself to it very busily again. "Mr. Judge has his little theory, Mr. Le Clear; we all have our little theories in the court, I believe, and Mr. Judge's is a discovery of the harmony which exists between color and sound. Have you tried any experiments, Mr. Judge?"

"Yes," said Nicholas, eagerly. "I took various

colored worsteds that Miss Pix had, and tried them with certain chords. Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff and I tried the effect, and we all agreed upon the same harmonies. Let us try it now."

"But I have no worsteds," said Miss Lovering.

"Is it possible!" said Le Clear. "Let me take your hand, Miss Lovering. I have lived to see the day when a lady is to be found who does not work in worsteds."

"I am very sorry," said she, with an air of meekness. "But you will have to live a little longer, Mr. Le Clear. I have worked in worsteds, and the only reason I have none now is that I have used up all I had, working them into this rug which your feet are on. Perhaps you are trampling under foot my work, you despise it so much."

"I suppose Mr. Judge would see or hear a potpourri," in this rug," said Le Clear, examining it. "Did you pick up your theory in Kingston, Mr. Judge, listening to the frogs when you looked at a marsh? or did you mix your views and chemicals at the same time? I went to see an artist friend of mind, to-day, Miss Lovering — I must show you some of his studies some day — and found him hunting over a pile of photographs in search of one which he remembered for a certain suggestion of color which he wanted. He remembered it, just as you or I might recall, without being able to repeat it exactly, a particular passage in a symphony or a poem. I confess I am more envious of artists than of any one else. Given the instinctive good taste which may belong to others besides artists, they have the capacity of jotting down in line or color this or that beauty which surprises them in unexpected places; they have not merely to carry it in their memory, where it could get confused with a thousand other

images, but they can make a few lines or some quick dashes of color in their note-book, and there the memorandum remains. In fact with some of them, I think, finished pictures are infrequent because their sketches and studies satisfy the immediate demand to catch and hold a scene, and their imagination and observation are so perpetually at work that they have no leisure to make pictures."

"But I should think that would be very unsatisfactory to an artist," said Miss Lovering. "I should think it would be like always putting things in order and never finding time to do anything. You see I am practical, Mr. Le Clear, and I know what it is to put off doing what I want to do until I have finished a number of little odds and ends that would haunt me otherwise by their incompleteness. What do you think, Mr. Judge? Should n't you think an artist, such as Mr. Le Clear describes, would be followed by a perpetual sense of always getting ready to do something?"

"I don't believe a true artist ever would let himself be satisfied with mere memoranda," said Nicholas, "for he creates as well as records; and there certainly must come a time when the passion of a picture would seize him, and he would work at it and leave his little jottings alone."

"Mr. Judge's fine wisdom is wasted this time," said Le Clear. "I was simply asserting that an artist with an eye for color and lines was perpetually in the way of taking a very keen delight in apparently insignificant things, and that he had, so to speak, a great deal more capital at his command than a person of merely good taste, whose occupation had not trained him to notice and record the infinitely varied effects in nature or common life or street architecture, for example. I am saying nothing about what an artist may or may

not do, but what he may enjoy. That 's what makes an artist's life so enviable."

Mr. Le Clear was standing with his back to the fireplace, and Miss Lovering, looking up from her work, was suddenly possessed with a sense of the admirable picture which the young man made. The background was not all that could be desired, but otherwise here was a most excellent subject for a " Portrait of a Gentleman." The artist in her looked with a certain sudden pleasure upon the subject. She was fain to cry, "Stay as you are, — let me sketch you," but she did not utter any such idle word, but smiled approvingly at the thought of the capital picture it would make. Mr. Le Clear caught the ingenuous expression and stepped forward to her.

" Come," said he, holding out his hand, " have we not had talk enough. Let me take your sketching and study it while you play." She rose gayly, gave him her work, and went to the piano.

" You are not going, Mr. Judge? Does my music drive you away? "

" I must go," said Nicholas, stumbling over a chair. " I have something to attend to," and with that, he made his way out of the room. Mr. Le Clear nodded to him as he left and fell to scanning the cambric in his hand.

" Is this a reminiscence of Miss Pix's carpet? " he asked, looking at the tracery in brown silk of oak leaves and acorn forms.

" I think it must be," said Miss Lovering. " I was waiting for a subject with my needle in my hand, when we were speaking of it."

" Do me a favor. Let me read to you the first draft of Woolner's poem, ' My Beautiful Lady,' in ' The Germ,' while you finish this little sketch by putting

P and S in the corner, and then let me have it as a souvenir of the evening I first had the pleasure of hearing music with you beneath the Musical Fund at Miss Pix's."

"What is P. S. for?" she asked, as she sat down and took up her work again. "A postscript to that evening?"

"Yes, if you like it so," said he. Then he opened "The Germ" and began the poem. Le Clear was an excellent reader. He cultivated a low and finely modulated voice, and its tones were certainly musical. The mystical, half interpreted lines of the poem, which pique the ordinarily inquisitive reader, he read with the air at least of one who wished to give the full meaning that might lie in them. Miss Lovering looked up now and then at the reader, and as she marked the earnestness with which his face accompanied his reading, it seemed to her that she never had seen a handsomer or more graceful man, and as her acquaintances were few, it is quite possible that she never had. As his voice ceased, there was silence for a few moments.

"The complement of the poem is in this picture of Holman Hunt's which is prefixed," he said, showing it to her.

"I am afraid the picture is more definite to me than the poem," she answered, after looking at it with him. "As I listened to the poem, I seemed to see the vaguest possible forms, misty and full of color, but the picture defines the figures and the scenes. I am not quite sure," she added, half sighing, "that I like mystical poetry. I think I might come to like it. Indeed, I am afraid I might come to like it."

"And why not?" he asked. "Why should you hesitate to trust yourself to any current of sentiment which takes you away from hard outlines? I suppose

you think me a cynical sort of fellow, and perhaps I am, but I think that such poetry as this and some music that I hear are both much to be preferred to opium."

"That is just it," she cried. "I have a horror of opiates in literature or art or religion. I need not be so heated about it, though," she added, with a laugh; "and besides, the sentiment is not original. An excellent aunt of mine delivered herself of it once, and I never forgot it."

"Tell me about her," said Le Clear, feeling a delicious sense of enjoyment in listening to the girl before whom he sat, which quite dispelled his ordinary pleasure in hearing his own discourse. "Tell me about your aunt. She was your next friend in the country, was she not?"

"She is my best friend still," said Miss Lovering, "and her weekly letters are my great comfort. I think very likely you would compare her to some maiden lady in a book, but she is the most real person I know."

"Is she a daughter of your grandfather here?"

"No; she is my father's sister. She was an elder sister of his, and I think she must have taken care of him, much as she takes care of me. It is like a story out of a book to hear her tell of the life they led when she was a girl, she and her sister and her brother. They were poor and there were few people about them who had any education or any books at all. Once my Aunt Miriam went away for a visit and found a copy of 'Marmion.' It was when it was first published, and she had not the money to buy it, nor could she borrow it, so she learnt it by heart and carried it home in that way. Then, when they were a little older there came an Englishman to the place where they lived. He had no family and no friends; nobody knew why he came

or why he stayed; he had a story — that was very plain, but what the story was no one knew, not even my aunt, I think, though I believe she suspected something. But Mr. Arnold used to receive 'The London Times,' and as there were not very regular foreign mails at that time, these papers came in huge packages to him. He read nothing else apparently, except his Bible and Shakespeare, but he read the 'Times' and then used to lend the paper to my aunt. She told me that she learned all her contemporary history in that way, and she used to make indexes of the contents of the newspaper. Mr. Arnold always kept every copy of the paper and in the little house where he lived, one room was entirely devoted to 'The London Times.' He painted the heading of the newspaper on the door, so my aunt said, and in that room he had all the numbers laid out in regular order. My aunt used to go to see him, and he would draw maps on the floor to show her where the different places were that were named in the paper. He suffered from some trouble with his eyes after a while, and she used to read to him every day. He always had her read in the 'Times' and then in Shakespeare and last in the Bible, and he seemed never at a loss when any name or event occurred in the paper. He could always tell her something more than appeared there. He knew nothing about our country, however, and never wanted to see our newspapers."

"He was a sensible man," remarked Le Clear at this point.

"Perhaps he was if he wished to live in England when he was in Kingston," said Miss Lovering. "That is another of my aunt's sayings. If I ever say anything that sounds sagacious, Mr. Le Clear, please understand that it is borrowed from my aunt. But that was the way she received her education. As the fam-

ily became better off, she was able to see more books, but I don't think she ever cared quite so much for books that I liked, as she did for the older ones that she learned about from Mr. Arnold."

"And what became of Mr. Arnold? Is he living still?"

"Oh, no, I never saw him to remember him. He died when I was a very little girl, but I have heard my aunt speak of him so often that I seem to have seen him."

"Tell me more about your aunt. Does she look like you?"

"I never was mistaken for her," said the young lady, demurely, "but perhaps I shall be, some day."

"There were strong mental resemblances, I presume," said Le Clear, with mock gravity.

"Oh, undoubtedly, as for instance that we both refused to have our pictures taken, and both were fond of early rising."

"Was 'The London Times' accountable for these noble traits of character?"

"Indirectly, no doubt. But see, Mr. Le Clear, I have worked a most elaborate P. L. C. I hope you will be able to devise some use to which to put this."

"I am not so practical as all that," said the young man. "I am so weak as to have some things for which no use can be discovered. Beauty is their excuse for being. But where is the S.?"

"Oh, you must imagine the S.," said Sally, going to the piano. She played unusually well this evening, and with a heightened color in her face which increased her beauty. Suddenly, in the midst of her playing, she stopped, and said: —

"You never told me the story of your music-box, Mr. Le Clear."

"Do you want its future story or its past story?" he asked.

"Begin, at the beginning, please, and I will tell you when to stop."

"We will have it with interludes," said he, going to the box and winding it. "It shall play its first tune, 'Robin Adair.' Do not take up your work again, Miss Sally, but let us sit here before the fire, while we make the music-box a cricket on the hearth." He placed the instrument on the hearth before them and set it in motion.

"The first time I heard that air was when I heard it from this little box. I was walking in the city and stopped to listen to a little boy and girl who were singing in the street. The little girl had a very sweet voice, and I gave her a piece of money. Presently I met them again as they had gone down a cross street while I had gone about. They were singing before a house but no one was at the window, or in the street. Presently they stopped singing as some other music sounded. They looked up and down the street for it, and I was puzzled myself to know where the sound came from. Finally I looked up and spied a music-box upon the sill of a window in the second story of a house near by. It was playing the tune of 'Robin Adair.' Now let us wind up this box again and have an interlude before the next chapter." The young gentleman slipped the catch, round went the wheel and "Scots wha ha" came tinkling forth. Miss Lovering looked on and laughed.

"I suppose it is not proper," said she, "to talk while the music is playing, else I should ask if the box was playing all by itself on the window sill."

"That comes in the next chapter," said Le Clear. "The music is intended to act as a stimulus to your imagination."

"Oh, I see everything perfectly," she exclaimed. "The box on the window sill; the children looking on in admiration, and yourself standing by with the air of a connoisseur."

"Then imagine a little more, now that the air is done," and he secured the cylinder of the box. "A man and boy were leaning out of the window, each with a Scotch bonnet on, and the children who had been singing began to sing again to the air, the Scotch words, at the same time dancing up and down in delight. At each new tune, they would start off with the words of the tune, and the man and boy joined them, so that the little music-box was quite drowned under all the voices. Now I will let the box play the rest of the airs, for it was when the last air was played that the next scene in my story appeared."

"I will try to imagine the end," said Miss Lovering, knitting her brows with a great effort and listening to the several Scotch airs which were already familiar enough to her. "The Blue Bells of Scotland" was the last one.

"Well, how did it turn out?" asked Le Clear, who had been watching her.

"At that moment," she said, with a story-teller's air, "the father of the boy suddenly cried, 'My children! oh, my children!' and rushed down to the little boy and girl, exclaiming in broken accents, 'My long lost children!' And then, seeing me, he exclaimed, 'And you, kind sir, have brought them to me; I never can repay you, but take my music-box as a slight expression of my gratitude.' In vain I protested that I had done nothing to bring the children back to him. In his excess of joy he placed the box in my arms. I accepted it, but contrived in various ways afterward to place the value of the box in the father's hands, retaining it as a souvenir of my little adventure."

Le Clear winced a little at Sally's pretty imitation of his own manner.

"The music has charmed you away from the facts," said he, laughing a little. "The end is really more commonplace. The Scotchman beckoned to the children to come up to him, and they went up very willingly. I kept on my walk, but often after that I passed through the street. One day I saw people about the door and a red flag. It was an auction sale, and going in, I found that the auctioneer was selling the effects of the Scotchman, who had recently died. He was a thrifty fellow who manufactured musical instruments. I recognized this music-box and bought it for a mere song."

"But did you never find out anything about his little boy, or about the boy and girl?"

"Oh, no. I used to think of them sometimes when I listened to my music-box, and fancy what had become of them all. I find that street musicians and small children of a vagrant character generally make better stuff for fancies than for actual acquaintance." Miss Lovering sat silently for a while.

"I should like very much to know what became of the children. But you said there was a future story of the box, Mr. Le Clear, and you have told me only its history."

"I feel hardly disposed to look very far into the future to-night, Miss Sally," said he. It was the second time he had chosen the girl's name in his speech, and she hardly knew whether to protest or to accept it. There was so few who gave her the name. She sat silent, turning it over, and lost the opportunity to protest in any way.

"I have had my theory," he went on, "that it is best to take leave of pleasure before it culminates;

the moment the top is reached, one begins to descend into some kind of regret; he makes mistakes; there is a jar, and he goes away or leaves his pleasure mixed with just a touch of pain. It is like midsummer; there is a rest for a moment when spring has reached its highest point, and then, in the same moment autumn begins. Have you never noticed it? that exquisite melancholy which seems to brood over nature as the year turns? Something of it came to me one day last summer and I wrote some verses which I called 'Midsummer Noon.' May I repeat them?" Miss Lovering raised her face and smiled assent.

"How floats the noon!
It is the trembling height
When turns the rising, falling tide:
The tide —
Through day and year its movements glide,
And day and year unite
In this high noon.

"From freshest morn
To heavy laden noon
The strong sun climbs the joyous sky;
The sky —
Adown its slope the flashes die,
As sinks at eve the sun,
Weary and worn.

"In quickening spring
The ecstasy of life:
In lordly summer life is crowned!
Is crowned —
Yet royal robes shall strew the ground
In autumn days: and life?
A buried king!

"O wondrous height,
O solemn depth of joy!
The heavenly arch is lifted high —
So high!
The deep lake give us back the sky,
And doth not quite destroy
Its tender light.

"There is no rest:
The seasons circle on,
The sun brings morn and noon and night:
Dark night
But not our rest. Again the light,
And still we journey on
From east to west."

"There is a strange pleasure," he went on, after a moment's silence, "in attempting to record what one may call the indistinct emotions. Do you not remember Wordsworth's 'Stepping Westward,' in which he describes the sensation which he felt when meeting, in one of the loneliest parts of the solitary region about Loch Katrine, the western sky yet aglow with after sunset light, two neatly dressed women who greeted him and his companion in a friendly, soft tone of voice, with the words — 'What, you are stepping westward?' The place, the dying sky in front, the sound of the voice, conspired to connect the salutation with something more than simple courtesy, and to create a momentary spiritual exaltation, changing the first sensation of 'wildish destiny' obeying chance, to a higher state of feeling, so that

'Stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of heavenly destiny.'

That subtle feeling tempts one more than direct and perfectly intelligible emotions. I am haunted by such evanescent moods sometimes, and wish to lay the ghosts by stretching them out in words. I remember seeing something in Thoreau to the effect that when he went out of doors to walk, without other plan, he invariably found his steps turning east. It exactly fitted in with an experience of my own, and I wrote these lines to try to cover my half understood feeling: —

"What heavenly quarter beckons us
When, standing on some grassy hill,

We look around with vacant will
And wait some wind to blow on us?
All views are fair, our hearts are still,
Except a timid, fluttering sense
Of pleasure hiding somewhere hence
And found, at last our soul shall fill.

"For me, I know, yet know not why
That though with wavering will I bend
And watch if any signs portend
In any quarter of the sky;
My veerings have one only end,
For toward the east I ever turn
Yet never can the secret learn —
What makes my footsteps thither tend."

"Now may we not have some Chopin?" he asked, rising from his seat. He was standing before her, and bending he gave her both his hands. She took them and rose, then hastily let them fall, and went with flushed face to the piano. She turned the leaves of her music without looking at him, and finding some reveries of Chopin began at once, first nervously, but in a moment with more composure, and continued page after page. Le Clear sat where he could watch her unobtrusively, and gave himself up to her face and the music. At length she closed the sheets and rose from the piano.

"Thank you," said Le Clear, "it is hard for me to put one of my theories into practice this evening, and bid good-by before my pleasure has culminated. How do I know now but another hour would bring me something much better?" There was a light in his eye as he spoke, but suddenly he held out his hand to her. "Good-night, Miss Sally. We will keep the future of the music-box for another evening."

"I must be so inhospitable as to close the door after you, Mr. Le Clear. I think I heard Maria go up-stairs some time since." At that moment the hall clock began to sound its imperious notes. They both listened and counted.

"Twelve o'clock," said each, looking in astonishment at the other.

"I must come some other evening and beg your pardon," said Le Clear. "The sin is too recent to-night. I want to roll it as a sweet morsel under my tongue." He tripped lightly down the stairs and she followed him. The door was bolted and barred, and a dim light only remained in the passage. It was necessary for Sally to instruct her visitor as to the intricacy of the fastening, and to help him clear the door, but at length it was free, and he stood with his hand at the handle. His companion standing beneath the faintly burning light was a figure of singular beauty. Her dark dress, her simple coiffure, were resolved in the dusky shade into lines of statuesque grace. To Le Clear she seemed at the moment a beautiful bronze endowed with life. A glow of feeling suddenly overspread his nature; there was an intoxication of sensuous delight, and a sudden enthusiasm possessed him. There seemed to him to be an exquisite moment, when life was poised, and a perfect harmony existed between them; he opened his lips for words that were sure to come, when there was a movement on the stairs, and he saw Maria slowly descending.

"Good-night," he repeated, taking her hand once more; opening the door, he passed outside, and in a moment more had entered his own lodgings. He slowly divested himself of his outer garments, and feeding his fire, sat down before it. He did not light his lamp, but shading his face, kept his place in his easy-chair. He abandoned himself to a succession of beautiful dreams. Stopping just this side of something very like a confession of love to the beautiful girl with whom the hours, deepening into night, had brought him into apparently very close sympathy, he now suffered himself

to take the step beyond, and to indulge in a full imagination of all that lay the other side of such a confession. He had fancied that her beauty had positively grown during the evening, and began to build upon this foundation, imagining to himself a woman whose full maturity of grace and fascination should be coincident with a perfect sympathy with him. The slight jars which he had now and then perceived in their intercourse with one another, had already, he fancied, yielded to the more positive impression of his own nature, and he pleased himself with the thought of swaying into perfect harmony so noble a spiritual mechanism as hers. From behind his church-warden pipe the vision of marriage grew into an ideal life that built its own house without the sound of hammer or saw, and noiselessly decorated the interior with forms and color which would make a fit background for the graceful figure moving about in it. Yet as the vision grew in stability, the very weight of the structure began to tell upon the cloudy basis upon which it rested, and Le Clear, fatigued by his own dreams, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and went to bed with the dissatisfied feeling of a man who had held in his hands for a few minutes the title-deed to a great estate, and then had seen it turn to ashes before his eyes. Still, that he had recovered himself, when on the verge of a declaration, had this in its favor, that it left him free to enjoy again the delicious sensation of advancing toward a consummate pleasure.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE regularity of Dr. Chocker's household had never suffered so severe a strain as when Miss Lovering unbolted the doors and dismissed Mr. Le Clear at midnight. Maria had twice gone past the door of the room where the two were sitting; once her young mistress had seen her, but the silent protest of the old woman was of no avail. There had crossed Sally's mind a little regret that she should not be able to bid her grandfather good-night, but when the time went by, she resigned herself with excellent grace to the inevitable.

"I am sorry you should have sat up, Maria," she said, as the door closed behind Le Clear. "I could have locked the door."

"You 'm a young girl," said the old woman, with a touch of asperity. "I would n't 'a had you coming down all alone at midnight, aye, in the very middle of the night, to lock up. I 'm eenamost scart myself. Go to bed, go to bed. It 's awful."

"What 's awful, Maria? were you never up at midnight before?"

"Never, that I knows of. Never was I up at midnight, except once, on New Year's eve, when I prayed the old year out and the new year in. I 've been a prayin' now, but it an't like church! We 'll go up together. Ye 'll not leave me here. Go to bed, go to bed, Miss Sally, and I 'll come up after ye." There

was something pathetic, as well as grotesque in the black woman's fear of midnight, which she seemed to personify as a sort of worldly evil spirit. The little swinging lamp hung on Maria's arm, and the two went the rounds, which had already been gone over by Maria alone, but seemed to require a special visitation to-night, in consequence of its being midnight. They looked out of the window from the staircase. The moon was shining upon the roofs of the houses about them, and a great cat stole mysteriously along the eaves of a shed near by. Not a solitary figure could be seen, and even Sally felt a little awe at the hour, — it was so very still. They paused before the clock at her grandfather's chamber door, and noted the hour. It was half after twelve. The candle, and almanac, and matches were ready by it, and the door to the adjoining study stood a little ajar. To their surprise, a light was burning dimly in the study. Sally looked in.

"Why, grandfather! at work still!" she exclaimed. "Come in with me, Maria." She went to the table. Her grandfather's back was toward her, his head bowed on his book, and the light on the table was dying out.

"Maria, he is asleep."

"Grandfather!"

She placed her hand on his shoulder. He did not move. A sudden horror seized her. She tried to speak, but the words were fast in her throat. She beckoned to the woman, who stood helpless in the doorway. At this moment the lamp died out altogether, and the only light came from the little swinging lamp on Maria's arm, and from a few coals still alive on the hearth. Maria seemed powerless to come to her, and it seemed to her impossible either to leave her grandfather or to continue to stand by that still form. But something must be done, and at length she said: —

"Light the candle, Maria, and bring it to me." The woman with trembling hands took a match, broke it, broke another, a third.

"Light the match at your lamp, Maria."

Maria obeyed and presently, after one or two failures, the candle was lighted. Sally held out her hand for it, and placed it on the table.

"Now Maria, listen to me," she whispered. "Get your hood and go to Miss Pix and bring her here. You can wait for her. Take the key with you."

"But I could n't a-leave you, Miss Sally," said the old woman, trembling.

"Never mind me; go." Maria shook with fear, then crept away with her lamp, down-stairs. The girl heard her go, heard the door open and close, and knew that she was alone. She sank on her knees, by the side of the old man. Then she arose, and going to a closet, brought out the oil can which she knew to be there; carefully filled the lamp, removed the dead wick and relighted it. A cheerful light grew steadily, filling the room with its pleasantness. She softly placed a few pieces of coal on the fire. Whatever she did, was done with a noiseless care, as if she feared to disturb the sleeper. She wondered what would be needed. The door into the chamber was partly open. She opened it farther and holding her candle looked in. The bed was turned down for the night. Everything was in readiness. Her grandfather's watch hung by the bedside, and she knew that he must have been preparing to retire. She reasoned it out in her mind, that he had come back to his table from some restlessness and had once more sat at his book; Maria had heard him go into his chamber, but had not heard him come out again. She would not go in. There seemed nothing to be done there. The fire was burning brightly.

The room was cheerful with the double light, while shadows lay in the corners. She began gently to arrange the books and papers, touching them here and there, to give them a more orderly look. She swept about the hearth, she brushed the dust away, every now and then letting her eyes fall on her grandfather. By degrees, the quiet seemed to possess her as completely as it did the old man and the room. She took a little chair and placing it by her grandfather's knee, sat upon it, gently laying her hand upon him. Then she heard the door open and steps ascend. But one person was coming, Maria, as she knew by the step. She rose and went to the door.

"Maria!"

"Yes 'm, Miss Pix is coming, but she would have me come first." Maria appeared, at this, toiling up the stairs, with her lamp still hanging from her arm. She had not parted with it.

"You can go down and wait for her at the door, Maria."

"Please, Miss Sally, let me sit on the stairs below here. She 'll be a-coming soon." The girl made no answer, but turned back to the room, and knelt again beside her grandfather. She remained thus, until she heard some one below at the door, heard Maria go down and open it. A light step came quickly up the staircase, and as the girl stood in the door-way, she saw her friend stretching out both her hands to her.

"Courage, Sally, courage!" cried the little woman in a whisper, and took her into her arms. Sally's heart beat violently; she was ready to burst into uncontrollable sobbing, but by a strong effort she kept back the torrent, and biting her lip hard, rested her head for a moment, and then stood upright. She waited to collect her voice, and then whispered, —

"He is not heavy. Do you not think we could carry him into the chamber?" She had led Miss Pix into the room, and they stood before the bowed figure. Miss Pix shook her head.

"No, Sally, we could not. You must not try. We need a man. I have sent Nicholas Judge for the doctor. I called Nicholas, as I knew we should want a man, and he will be back in a moment. My dear, we cannot do without a man." In spite of the occasion, Miss Lovering could scarcely repress a smile at Miss Pix's energetic dependence on a man. Miss Pix went to the chamber and opened the windows. "He is back already," she said. "Let Maria call him in, and I will speak to him." Maria, standing in the passage, had already heard the words, and was on her way down-stairs before the order could be given to her. She returned presently, followed by Nicholas, who entered the parlor. Miss Pix went down to him.

"Come up with me," said she, and he obeyed; in the door-way of the bright room stood Miss Lovering, her hand upon the lintel. Nicholas spoke, without waiting for either to address him: —

"Miss Lovering, the doctor will be here shortly. I came back without waiting for him, hoping I might help you."

"You are very good," said she, and it crossed her mind strangely that he had spoken the same words to her but a short time before. She hesitated a moment. "I have wished to have my grandfather moved to his chamber, but Miss Pix does not think that we are able to do this. Shall we wait for the doctor?" The young man, with her silent consent, entered the room. He bent over her grandfather, and then looked with a questioning glance at Miss Lovering. She came forward, and as he put his arms beneath the old scholar and

raised him, she stood by the bowed head and let it rest on her hand. Thus they bore the burden to the chamber and laid the cold form upon the bed. Nicholas bent over him, and with her gently folded his hands in the way he was wont to hold them, when quiet. Then he withdrew quietly, and left the young girl by the bedside. He came back to the study and found Miss Pix walking up and down the room, her eyes full of tears, but every now and then giving some little touch, as if trying to bring a little order out of the queer confusion of the books that were tumbled about in all parts of the room.

"I will wait below in the parlor," said he, "at any rate until the doctor comes."

"I 'll stay here," whispered Miss Pix. "The poor dear, I won't disturb her, but when she comes out she shall find me here."

Miss Lovering remained by her grandfather. She knew he was dead, but the dread of that cold body was gone from her, and she smoothed his hair and bending over him, gave all her thought to a loving and tender care of him. It was not without a pang of self-reproach that she thought of her evening in the room below, while her grandfather sat dead here. That she should not have had her nightly parting with him, seemed now a loss which it would be impossible ever to repair. These matters and many more went rambling through her mind. She began to wonder what the rest in the house were doing; were they sitting together, whispering about her? and what should she do? She suddenly recollected that for the present, at least, she was the one to give orders and direct. The doctor would come — she had never asked who it was, and she had never known her grandfather to have a physician. Then she reflected that probably it would be the same one who

attended Mrs. Blake, and she remembered how quiet and grave he was when he came down-stairs and spoke with Mr. Judge. She thought she could trust him. She began to wish he would come. A weary feeling came over her. She could not leave her grandfather, and she began to be oppressed with the thought of remaining there. She heard the door open, and steps ascend the staircase. She rose from her place and stood in the door-way that led to the study. The doctor came forward and she held out her hand for the light, which she placed now in the chamber. She stood by the doctor's side motionless, as he raised his hand, listened at his heart and watched narrowly for any sign of life. He asked a few questions, but there was little that could be said by either. No voice had yet pronounced him dead, and a sudden rush of feeling came over the girl.

"Is he dead?" she asked, in a choked voice.

"Yes, my child, he is dead." She knelt again by the bed and burst into a passionate flood of tears. The doctor waited silently, while Miss Pix stood in the door-way, weeping bitterly. But the paroxysm of grief was soon spent. The doctor went into the study and motioned Miss Pix to go to her friend, and presently the two reappeared.

"There is nothing that I can do further," said he, "at this time. I have given here the address of an undertaker, should you know of none and it would be well to send for him at once. You are not likely to rest, Miss Lovering, until the responsibility is removed from you, but Miss Pix will stay with you, I am sure, and I will come again in the forenoon. Now shall I give this memorandum to Mr. Judge? He is below and is ready to do anything?"

"Yes," said Sally, "and can I send a dispatch?"

"If it is going to the country it cannot go before

about eight o'clock, but it will be well to get it to the office early. Mr. Judge will take it for you."

"I 'll speak to Nicholas," said Miss Pix, starting forward.

"Wait a moment," said Miss Lovering. Every one seemed bound to bring Mr. Judge in, and yet she did not at the moment see how she could do without him.

"He can go to the undertaker's, if he will," said she; "it is no matter about the dispatch. I will see him myself," she added, with a sudden thought that thus much courtesy might be right toward one who had already done so much. She went down-stairs with the doctor, who kept on and left the house. She stopped in the parlor, where the young man was sitting before the dead fire. He rose as she entered the room.

"I have been thinking," he said, "that you might like your aunt telegraphed to. Shall I take a message to the office? and if there is any other errand, I am ready."

"Thank you. The doctor gave me this memorandum, and said you had kindly offered to go. I should like my aunt," and her voice trembled, "but no dispatch could get to her at this hour."

"There is no telegraph line to Kingston direct, and the message must be carried over by a special messenger from Chester. If you will have the dispatch ready for me on my return, I will take it then." She assented silently and returned to Miss Pix, while the young man went on his errand. When he returned the dispatch was ready for him.

"I have been very selfish," said Miss Lovering. "I have not asked you how your aunt is; and you have been back and forth all night for me. It is nearly morning now." Nicholas was silent for a moment, gaining the mastery of his voice. He turned

away his head for a moment, but when he looked again and saw Miss Lovering's eyes bent anxiously upon him, he shaded his face and answered simply : —

"I did not mean to bring any trouble of mine here, Miss Lovering. My aunt died about midnight."

"Oh!" said the girl, with a long sigh, and laid her hand upon his arm. He took it in his own, and raised it as if to kiss it, then let it fall. "You know it was not a sudden thing to me, Miss Lovering. I have been looking for it daily."

"And you have been here, and have been doing all this for me!"

"I could do nothing else." He held himself back by a mighty effort. His whole frame shook, and he dared not trust himself further, but turned, without another look or word, and fled from her presence. The cool night air, as he walked rapidly through the streets, brought back some temperance to his blood, but again and again the cry burst from his heart, "Oh, if I might but have spoken! if it had been right to speak!" He reached the office, and sent the dispatch by the night service. Then he added one of his own, calling for the exact hour when it should be delivered to Miss Lovering. He walked home, and entered his own house. Mrs. Starkey came to him. It seemed as if something of his aunt's quiet and peace had passed in life into this beaten body and soul, and that at death a double peace had descended upon the living. She led him to his aunt's room, where, with Hannah's aid, she had ordered everything. The room was as it always had been. Nothing could be added by death to the purity of the chamber. Yet the still form that lay with hands folded seemed to render the whiteness about of a shining purity. Upon the light stand by her bedside, Mrs. Starkey had placed the little bit of cambric which Miss

Lovering had sketched, and upon it a vase, empty now, but ready for the rose which she was sure Nicholas would bring. The morning light was just entering the room.

"We have done everything as we thought she would have had us," said Mrs. Starkey. "Mr. Judge, I never can thank you enough for letting me do this for the blessed saint. Yet it misgives me that Miss Pix, who loved her so dearly, should have had no hand here. I did as you told me, however, and did not call her."

"Miss Pix has had other troubles, Mrs. Starkey. She has been since midnight with Dr. Chocker's granddaughter. The old man died last night."

"The Lord have mercy upon us. And that poor child alone with that half-blind black woman!" Just then there was a knock from Miss Pix's side of the house.

"I will go down to her," said Nicholas; and descending, he opened the door that connected the houses, and found Miss Pix seeking admission.

"O Nicholas, Nicholas," cried the little woman, "what a night this has been to you! Why did you not tell me? Yet what could I have done? That good aunt of yours! When Miss Sally told me of it, she begged me to leave her. 'Everybody thinks of me,' she said; 'do let me think of some one else.' But I could not leave her, and indeed, Nicholas, I can't tell in my heart which of you poor dears is the most to be pitied. But you are both just noble, and that 's what I say; and I say it to you as I said it to her. Now do, dear Nicholas, lie down, and let me make you some coffee. That poor old black Maria is as helpless as a black glove, and just sits and rocks herself in the kitchen. I have got Miss Sally to lie down, and I ran home to make a pot of hot coffee. I can make it so

much better, you know, in my own coffee pot. But oh, oh, how can I run on this way, when you are all so in affliction. I never could say the right word; but Nicholas," and she wrung his hand, "if there 's anything to be done, please, please ask Betsey Pix to do it. I 've been stifling at the other house. To see that dear girl so calm and collected, and her old grandfather dying so mysteriously, I could not contain myself. I knew I should break out beyond anything, and so I came home for a moment. But I 'm going back as soon as I get my coffee made;" and here Miss Pix, who was exhausted and excited, broke down completely, and sat on the nearest seat, hunting in a distressed way for her handkerchief. Nicholas waited a while, and then, as she grew calmer, said: —

"I know you are tired, Miss Pix, and the night has been a hard one for you. Come up-stairs with me before you go, and I think you can carry back to Miss Lovering some comfort from my aunt." She obeyed his gesture and followed him up-stairs. He was right. The calm and still room pacified her, and she went away with a smile which restored her face to its wonted brightness.

CHAPTER XVII.

Nicholas found it impossible to rest. A messenger from the telegraph office brought him a dispatch, notifying him when the message was delivered to Miss Miriam Lovering, in Kingston. He reflected that there were two hours before the morning train would pass through the village, and that the lady would find time in that two hours to make ready her departure. The train would reach the city at noon or a little after. He went out from the house. There were some needful things to be done for his own household. He must see the minister who counted Mrs. Blake in his parish. He must attend to this and that matter. He went through his tasks mechanically, returning every now and then to his aunt's room to sit, but that refuge he was forced to leave when those came, to commit the perishable frame to whom it seemed a desecration.

He had intended going to the train and meeting Miss Lovering, when it suddenly occurred to him that however this might fit into his own mood, there was after all some assumption in doing this upon his own motion only. He had been finding a faintly delicious pleasure in the thought of doing this, unasked, and had known even something of the pleasure of deferring another visit to one who was perpetually in his thought, but as by a rude reminder, his mentor suggested to him that something of this pleasure must be foregone, lest he should be in peril of a graver error. Accordingly he

turned his steps again to Dr. Chocker's house. As he came to it, the door of the adjoining house opened, and Mr. Le Clear came out. He looked sharply at Nicholas, but turning aside his glance for a moment, he saw the signal which hung from the handle of Dr. Chocker's door, put out in the melancholy fashion of our social ritualism to betoken that death had passed that way.

"What! is any one dead in here?" he asked.

"Dr. Chocker died suddenly, early this morning."

"Possible! why I was there myself until midnight."

"He died near that hour probably."

"Was his granddaughter with him?"

"She found him dead when she went up-stairs."

"Are you going in?"

"Yes." But as they stood thus talking, the door opened and Miss Pix came out.

"This is sad news, Miss Pix," said Le Clear, gravely. "I have only just learned it. Will you give my sympathy to Miss Lovering and say that I am wholly at her service. I hardly think it right to intrude upon her now, merely to express my sympathy."

"There is nothing to be done," said Miss Pix, "nothing that I know of, that Mr. Judge has not done already. I forgot to ask you if you sent the dispatch, Nicholas?"

"It was about that that I was intending to see Miss Lovering, but I think I would rather speak with you." Mr. Le Clear bowed to the pair and went out of the court.

"I'll go with you," said Miss Pix, when Nicholas had explained the matter. "How soon ought we to be there? — now? I'll go in and explain to Miss Sally that we are going."

"I told her," said she, when she returned, "that I was going to meet her aunt because she had written

about me, and her aunt would know me, and you were going, because you know her aunt by sight, and could identify her. I think that's the word they use in such cases." Miss Pix's spirits seemed to rise as they walked together to the station.

"It's a holiday with me, you see. Oh, there I ought not to say that. Yes, it is though, it's a holy day. It's better to go to the house of mourning — I know it is, and I'm not really light, Nicholas, it's only my way. Really and truly, I am very much affected. I know I could not have gone to my pupils to-day, even if I had not been helping Miss Sally a little. But it was a great deal better to be there, helping ever so little, than staying at home and crying. I am going to cry now, but you must n't mind; I've got my veil down;" and so her talk tumbled out, as she half trotted beside Nicholas's taller figure.

"How did you get word to your pupils?" asked Nicholas.

"Mr. Windgraff went to see them. I sent Gretchen for him after breakfast. He was very, very sorry. I wanted to play a *marche funebre*, but he did not think it best. He has such excellent judgment." Miss Pix straightened herself up at this and seemed quite to be braced against her friend's upright character. They reached the station in season for Nicholas to order a carriage to be in readiness, and presently the expected train came rumbling into the house. Miss Pix pulled Nicholas toward her and hastily said in a confidential tone: —

"She said it was very thoughtful of you, and that her aunt would be greatly obliged to you; that she knew you were a neighbor of hers." The train drew up before them, and Nicholas watched the passengers descend.

"There she is," said Miss Pix, eagerly. "That lady getting out of the next car, with a basket."

"It is she," said Nicholas, and they went forward to her. Miss Lovering stood hesitating a moment on the platform, eyeing the clamorous coachmen to single out one less rapacious looking than the rest, so that she did not see the two until they were at her elbow.

"Miss Lovering," said Nicholas.

"What! ah! young Judge?"

"Yes'm. Miss Pix, Miss Lovering. Miss Pix is a friend of your niece's whom I brought at her request."

"We're neighbors," said Miss Pix, eagerly. "Almost next door. Poor, poor Miss Sally. Let me take your basket, please. Nicholas has found a carriage. He sent the dispatch off this morning before daylight. Oh, it was very sudden." Nicholas, with all his old shyness returned, was hurrying off to find the coachman he had retained.

"Come along," said he, somewhat abruptly, to Miss Pix. "This way." He plunged ahead to lay hold of his coachman, who was trying to fascinate some other travelers. After nervously escorting the two ladies through the crowd, he succeeded in establishing them in the carriage and sending it off to Five-Sisters Court, while he himself gladly refused their invitation to accompany them. There was nothing quite so grateful to him at this time as solitude, and he availed himself of it with an obstreperous eagerness. As he threaded the streets his mind turned over and over the few further glimpses that he had had of Miss Sally Lovering. Did Le Clear indeed pass half the night in his call upon her? He remembered the passages of the evening before; he remembered the looks which had passed between them, and his judgment attempted to convince him that the passion which he himself con-

ceived for the girl was spending itself in its own gesticulation, and gaining no support from any motion of hers. He turned over the meagre words which Miss Pix had reported to him, and they sounded hollow and conventional, all the more that Miss Pix had displayed an unseemly sense of their significance. Then the meeting with Miss Miriam Lovering bought back his old life at Kingston, and reminded him how impossible it would be for the elder lady to suppose the interval between them to have been in any way bridged over by the experience of the last few days and weeks. A dismal feeling possessed him that all went for nothing, that he was back in Kingston again, looking at Miss Sally Lovering as a distant star, and shyly pursuing his own silent way, regarded, if at all, with a misty aversion by the people of the village. So he came back by these mental turnings to his aunt's bedside, and as if he had suddenly lost again both mistress and aunt, his life seemed stripped bare.

He entered the court and his own house in blank, apathetic mood, and shut himself in his room. The minister had been to see him, and he only felt relieved that he had escaped any special condolence. He tried to work, but he was too listless. He was called to dinner, and when that was over, he took his hat again and walked out. Nothing but the open air seemed to have any allurement for him. He made his way out of town to the old chimney and mocked himself with the echoes; he visited Tommy's Rocks again, and now, tired in body and thoroughly dissatisfied with himself, he returned to his house.

It was not long before Miss Pix came to him.

"Where have you been all this afternoon?" she asked. "You have been asked for by Miss Lovering and her niece. Did you think there was any one else

who could be so useful?" There was a gravity about Miss Pix that was unusual to her.

"Yes," said Nicholas. "I was tired. They could easily call in Mr. Le Clear. You heard his offer of services."

"Nevertheless, there is something in a common trouble, Nicholas. Did you see the flowers which Miss Sally sent for your aunt?"

"Yes; they were very beautiful. It was very thoughtful in her."

"Come and thank her yourself," said Miss Pix, "and perhaps there may be something you can do for them. . . . I was sure," she continued to Mrs. Starkey, after he was gone, "that he needed something to rouse him. This has been a terrible day to him, and he would get into a very unhealthy condition, unless he were forced out of it. I know him, oh, I know him," and Miss Pix turned her head over with a sagacious air.

The door was opened for Nicholas by Miss Sally Lovering herself, who chanced to be in the passage. He cast his eyes down when he saw her. He was not prepared for her, and she received him so frankly that he was filled with despair.

"You were very kind, very good," he said, "your flowers were very grateful."

"I almost feared to send anything but white," she said, "but, will you come up-stairs? My aunt wishes to thank you." He followed her into the parlor, where Miss Lovering was taking her tea. The lady rose and held out her hand.

"My niece has told me of your kindness, and of your own trouble. How strangely people come together. The city does not seem very large when two Kingston people are discovered living in the same little

court. You have not been in Kingston have you, since you left?"

"No, ma'am. I have lived very quietly here with — with my aunt."

"I should like much to have known her. My niece was writing me but a few days since of a long conversation she had with her. Such friends are never replaced. I remember once when one of my friends had the misfortune to lose his house by fire. There was an old portrait by Copley that was burned, and he said that for months afterward he was haunted by the thought how absolutely impossible it was to replace a painting by a dead artist. No amount of wealth could buy back that picture. And how much more worth has a human friend. We may get new friends, but we never can have again just that friend." Miss Lovering spoke in measured and dignified tones, which somehow seemed to reflect themselves in Nicholas's speech, and he found himself answering in a half courtly way, as if, he said to himself afterward, he had just been having his own picture painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

"True, madam, but there is something in a friend which does not die out, and as the recollection of a portrait is something which fire cannot wholly destroy, so the remembrance of a friend, her tones and herself, do not perish at death." Miss Lovering looked at him attentively, while Miss Sally Lovering who sat near, looked from one to the other, as they bowed ceremoniously and wondered what had come over the young man, whom she had never seen quite in this *rôle*.

"I should be glad," continued Nicholas, "if I could be of any service to either of you ladies," and as he said it, he seemed to himself to be a spectacled ghost, lifting a skeleton hat.

"I thank you," said Miss Lovering; "you have al-

ready been very thoughtful. My niece tells me that you attend at the same church where she has been. Her grandfather has not been in the habit, for many years, of attending Divine service. We should be grateful if you would state these matters to the rector, and ask him to come to us."

"I will go now," said Nicholas, rising at once, relieved at escaping what seemed to him an interview at which he saw himself in a sort of vague perspective, unable to get into the actual vicinage of the people in the room. He had been aware of a pleasant fragrance, and as he rose his eyes instinctively sought the flowers. They stood upon the piano, and Miss Lovering, noticing his glance, called his attention to them more closely.

"They are from a neighbor, a Mr. Le Clear, who was a great admirer of Dr. Chocker. I think he called himself in some sense a disciple of his. What were his words, Sally?"

"He quoted the line —

'This is our master, famous, calm, and dead.'"

"I do not remember the line," said Miss Lovering.

"It is from Robert Browning's 'A Grammarian's Funeral.' He read it to me once," she added, with hesitation, "when we had been speaking of my grandfather."

"That explains it," said Miss Lovering. "His note was not quite clear, as you read it, Sally." Nicholas looked hard at the younger lady. His heart beat violently; he fumbled for his hat, and almost without another word, left the room and the house.

"That young man has changed a good deal since he was in Kingston, Sally," said her aunt. "The city has done something for him, but I don't see but he has some of his old shyness left, after all. Have you seen him often?"

"Several times; he is a friend of Miss Pix, and I have seen him at her house. He was very kind to me last night, as I told you. Was it last night? it seems so long since."

"And this Mr. Le Clear, I supposed he was an old man, like your grandfather. But perhaps I was mistaken."

"No, he is not so very old. In fact, he is about Mr. Judge's age, I should think."

"And he is a friend of Miss Pix?"

"Miss Pix knows him, but she has never seen so much of him. He is quite different. She is full of her music, but Mr. Le Clear is interested in art and books and music, too. I have spoken of him in my letters, have I not?"

"I think you did mention him once, but I did not get the impression, somehow, that he was a young man."

"Don't let us talk about them to-night, dear aunt. It does not seem quite right," said the girl, arranging the flowers before her.

The funeral of Mrs. Blake was from church, and took place at an earlier hour than Dr. Chocker's. The dwellers in the court were present and the four musical Germans, but few others. A single white rose lay in the hand of the dead lady, but a few half faded flowers were placed at the foot of the bier. Those who noticed them wondered not so much at the meagreness of the display, as at the seeming indifference which should allow flowers so near their end to be placed there. Miss Lovering and her niece were present, and the younger lady, seeing them, scarcely knew whether to be vexed or moved. They were the flowers which she had sent upon the day of Mrs. Blake's death. They were not the only flowers, she knew, which had been sent in, for

Miss Pix had confided to her her difficulty in deciding between an anchor to symbolize hope, and a cross to symbolize suffering, and a crown to symbolize victory, which had resulted in her abandoning symbolism altogether and sending in a basket of flowers. Yet here was her poor offering looking like very neglect itself rather than the freshest offering of love.

Nicholas was the solitary mourner. He followed the clergyman and the coffin, and during the whole service knelt at the chancel rail. It was as if in this moment of his life he felt an utter loneliness, and when the little congregation had left, and he entered the one carriage with the clergyman, and so followed his aunt to the grave, it was almost as if he himself were being carried into solitary oblivion.

As the people left the little church, Le Clear stood gravely in the aisle beside Miss Sally Lovering. She had been aware that he had entered and taken a seat directly behind her, and throughout the service she had been unable to keep her mind wholly from him. He was waiting for her, it was plain, and she turned her face toward him. In her strained and almost morbid condition, there was an indistinct feeling of sharing with him in some guilt. While they had blended talk and music and glances but three evenings since, her grandfather was dying, and still lay unburied in the house. She cast her eyes down, but did not wholly avoid him.

"I have not dared to intrude upon you," he whispered, "yet I would ask if I might be allowed to come this afternoon?"

"Yes," she replied, in a low tone. "Thank you for the flowers."

"They must already have faded," said he, "and I have presumed to send others this morning." They

were already in the open air and leaving the church. Sally turned to her aunt, and Le Clear, bowing to both, left them and walked rapidly away.

"Who was that young gentleman, Sally?" her aunt asked.

"It was Mr. Le Clear, Aunt Miriam. He stopped to ask if he might come this afternoon." Miss Lovering's eyes followed the retreating figure.

"He is a younger man than I supposed," she said, and it was evident that the Mr. Le Clear of her imagination was shedding his years, under increasing light, with great rapidity. It was almost a little procession which moved from the church to Five-Sisters Court, for Mrs. Starkey and Hannah, Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff, Messrs. Schmauker, Pfeffendorf and Pfeiffer, with their families, and Gretchen, all went that way, besides Miss Lovering and her niece. The day seemed to all of them, but especially to the dwellers in the court, to have a special character, and there was something indecorous in the busy movements of the street, the jostling crowds, the noise and disorder. To have been to one funeral and to be, as it were, on the way to another, brought a certain stillness into the minds of all which rendered ordinary affairs intrusive.

It was a very little gathering that met afterward in Dr. Chocker's house. The German gentlemen, save Mr. Windgraff, were not willing to presume upon their slight acquaintance with the old scholar, and though Mrs. Starkey and Hannah were there, and Miss Pix and Mr. Windgraff, and Gretchen and Mr. Le Clear, Nicholas Judge had not returned. One or two friends of Dr. Chocker, who seemed to have been brought out of their cells and dusted for this occasion, were present, and Miss Pix, at Miss Lovering's request, went with the two ladies and Maria to the grave

Maria, since her master's death, was as one bewildered. She sat most of the time in her kitchen, mechanically rocking and reading her hymn-book, but the main-spring of her daily works had been broken, and all the machinery was lame and impotent. She obeyed her young mistress in anything that could be done when the order came, but she was no longer competent to follow any order beyond the immediate moment, and accordingly Sally was wont to make visits every few minutes to the kitchen to start Maria again, as if she were some poor, worn-out clock which would go for a few minutes after being wound, but needed constantly to be set in motion.

It was a mild afternoon, and there seemed to be a gentle starting in nature, as if preparations were making for an escape from the winter into all the hope and expectation of spring. As they drove into the burial ground, the bell in the tower sounded a few strokes, and their talk, which had turned simply upon the signs of new life about them, ceased, and each sank back into her place, resuming the threads of thought which had been spun by this death. They came to the grave, and as they left the carriage they noticed a newly made grave adjoining that which was to receive the old scholar's remains. Some faded flowers lay at its head. Sally looked hastily at them and turned away. They seemed to obtrude themselves upon her here at this place. She did not know that Mrs. Blake's grave was there, and it almost seemed for a moment as if there were some design in it. She stood with the others at the open grave, while the minister pronounced a few words of farewell and let the earth slip through his fingers upon the lowered case. As they turned away, Miss Pix arrested her by the neighboring mound.

"I believe this is Mrs. Blake's," said she. "How singular! Look, why there is Nicholas!" and at that moment they both saw a solitary figure coming down a path near by. It was Nicholas Judge, who, lingering about the ground and seeing a funeral party near his aunt's grave, drew nearer. He stopped, for he recognized presently the figures and faces, and turned away.

"Nicholas!" said Miss Pix in a loud whisper, energetically beckoning to him. But he paid no heed, and kept on his way.

"Why should we not stay here a little while?" asked Miss Pix, who was so seldom in the country that it was depressing to her to return in the close carriage to the city.

"No, no," cried Sally. "Let us go back at once;" and she seemed eager to get them all into the carriage again. As they rolled out of the grounds, she saw Nicholas once more, loitering on a by-path, evidently waiting until the party should have left.

And now, Dr. Chocker and Mrs. Blake are out of the story.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Life in Five-Sisters Court went on again apparently in much the same way as before, so far as the outward eye could see. The two recluses who had left were not wont to impress themselves much upon the external character of the court, and the occupants of the houses which they had once held, passed in and out as before. To Nicholas, indeed, there was a dead feeling always present. His aunt was gone; a lonely sad-visaged woman remained, who came to him, earnestly expressing her willingness to seek some other home, but held back by him with an absent-minded kindness of speech, which made it hard for her to determine what the real thought was that lay behind it. He would not confess to himself, but it nevertheless was apparent to him without confession, that he had sought to bury in the grave with his aunt the hope which he had cherished, and which had flamed so fiercely during those days of death. It was with almost a despisal of himself therefore that he left his room one afternoon, thinking to go to the daily evening service at his church, knowing as he did, that his hunger for a possible sight of Sally Lovering was more active than any craving for religious nourishment. Nevertheless, when he entered the church and took his customary seat and glanced at hers and found it vacant, he was relieved that she should not be there, and joined in the feeble responses of the feeble congregation with a patient effort at in-

terest. Suddenly as he looked up at the end of the service, he saw her. She had put on mourning for her grandfather, and her slight figure looked even slighter in its close-fitting dress. He had not seen her since he had seen her at a distance in the burial ground, and the whole flood of his nature which he had been damming up, seemed at once to burst all the feeble bands which he had set to it. He felt his heart beat with a steady thud, thud, within him, and as he left the church, he stepped to the girl's side.

"Good afternoon," said he, in a husky voice, which seemed to himself to be a voice left behind him somewhere. She looked at him a little timidly. His voice and his manner betrayed his feeling, and she was herself responsive to emotions, which they seemed singularly to be having in common.

"I hope you have not been ill," she said. "My aunt has been troubled about you. That afternoon" — she said it in a low voice, as if it were a sacred day — "after we came home, my aunt had a severe headache, or she would have sent to ask you to come in, to see us."

"Would you have wanted me?" he asked. She hesitated a moment, then said quickly, —

"Why, yes; I can never be grateful enough for all you did for me."

"Grateful!" he cried. "Do not use that word. I cannot bear it. I would as lieve hear you say you respected me."

"But I do," she said; and then, perceiving her mistake, she hastily added, "I do not believe it is well for us to say these things to one another. I have been taught to avoid protestations in words and to trust to what one does. Is not that enough? of course it is enough, for you might misunderstand my words, as it seems you did just now."

"No, it is not enough," he said, passionately; "or if it is, then have I not spoken to you again and again? Is it nothing that my eyes have followed you whenever they could find you; that I have studied how I could do the least thing for you; that I have avoided all hollow protestations of words and little gifts, and given you myself wholly, wholly, wholly? Have you not seen this? Are we not here together? and is it not because I could not live longer without the sight of you, and went where I hoped I might find you, not that I should say this to you, but that I might silently love you, as I have loved you this long time? There, I have said the word to you, that I have said to myself in whispers, and I say it to-day because I know I cannot live this double life any longer. I did not mean to say this, this afternoon, but it has been ready, oh, this long while, and it is misery to keep it longer to myself, even if it is greater misery to tell it. Do not answer me," he cried, as he strode along by her side, "do not answer me." Miss Lovering was silent, not so much because he bade her not answer him, as because she was herself bewildered by his burst of passion.

"I am so sorry," she said at last, and her voice refused to carry any other words; it seemed to her that she must get away and be by herself, and yet at the same moment came a more resolute feeling. "That is cowardly," she thought. Suddenly Nicholas turned to her again.

"That is not your answer," he said, mournfully. "It cannot be your answer. Do not say anything more. Just let me walk with you to your house. I will not speak. You know," he tried to say playfully, but with a miserable sense of failure, "that words are good for nothing. Let me try what silence can do." But if silence was his speech, not so with Miss Lovering. She was aroused to a sense of her situation.

"I must speak," said she arresting his gesture. "It is not right that I should be silent. It is all so strange to me," she cried. "I did not know you cared for me, at least not in this way. I have had no thought of these things, or if I have, it has not been to watch for them from you. Forgive me, if I wound you, but I must not let you go on and think that all this time I have been silently asking you to care for me a little more, and a little more, until it has come to this; and I cannot let you go now and think of it as something to be said again, as if I had not answered you and were willing to wait with you. Oh, I am so sorry, but really, really I did not see all this. What can I say? What shall I say? You must not speak thus to me." She paused now and then, as if to elicit from her companion some assent to her words, but he heard her silently through all. They had passed, absorbed in their words, by the mall, and had come again into the street. The crossing interrupted their speech. Nicholas, gently and with watchful courtesy, made a way for her among the carriages and drays, and they left the main street by the narrow alley that led directly to Amory Street. There was a lull from the noise, and a certain privacy in this retired passage. Nicholas stopped and looked full in the girl's face.

"I love you," he said abruptly, but slowly, and walked again beside her. She said nothing; she was baffled by the inability to reply. It would have been cruel and wanton, and indeed, under the confusion of her mind, hasty to retort, "I do not love you," and nothing short of that would suffice. She could not admit his love, she could not absolutely and positively stand by the denial of her own. She had made her protest, and she was forced to rest in that. Indeed, too, the earnestness and depth of sincerity with which

his last words were spoken could be met by nothing less sincere.

Nicholas parted from her at her door; he said nothing, but took her hand for a moment in an abstracted way and left her. Already it seemed that his mind had hastened away from a too rigid present moment and sought an escape into regions where it would be confronted by spectres it may be, but not by hard, realistic personal obstacles. At any rate, she watched him as he walked down the court, without turning back, and then entered her own door, which was opened by Maria.

That evening, as she sat with her aunt, she maintained an unusual silence. She had been wont to make her aunt her confidant in everything, yet now she found it impossible to disclose what had passed between her and Nicholas. "Have I the right to do this?" she asked herself. "I have answered him, and that must be the end. I ought not to make known his confession. It was made to me. There is nothing to consult my aunt about." Nevertheless, she was oppressed by the recollection of the scene. She tried to read, but could not. Her aunt sat steadily knitting, not unobservant of what was passing, but silently awaiting her niece's words. At length Sally laid aside her book.

"Dear Aunt Miriam," she said; "how soon may we go back?"

"So you do not want to stay here in your own house?"

"No. I long to go back to Kingston, to you and Aunt Rebecca."

"Think well of it, Sally. You have come here to the city, and the country will not be quite the same to you again. I know it is not quite right to leave you

here alone; but you are your own mistress, and your grandfather's property will be sufficient for you." She did not look at Sally as she said this, but kept steadily on with her knitting.

"I have half a mind to go to Europe," said the girl; "but you would not go with me. No, I am certain that I want to go back to Kingston. And yet," she hesitated a moment, and then said frankly, "it will not be the same to me. Perhaps it will be better. At any rate, I shall be with you and Aunt Rebecca; and nothing can be better for me than that. There is no one else I want to be with."

Nothing more was said this evening; but the next day Sally resumed her talk with her aunt. She would, at any rate, go now to Kingston; and, since she was eager to go at once, she would close the house, leaving it as it was, and take Maria with her to her aunt's.

"Perhaps the change will restore her in some way," she said, though she looked with pity and doubt upon the poor soul that seemed to drift about helplessly, now that her steadfast master had been taken from her. Miss Miriam Lovering by no word or accent had sought to influence her niece; but the decision once made, she hastened, with cheerful alacrity, to aid her in her preparations. As Sally was moving about the rooms, arranging them, with a curious sense of ownership which had already fastened itself upon her natural self-possession and dignity, she stopped before Mr. Le Clear's music-box, which had not been opened since the night when he had stopped half-way in his story of its adventures. She opened it, turned the key a little, and heard the first few notes of "Robin Adair."

"What 's this dull town to me?" she hummed to herself, and closed the box. She sat down to write a note to the owner, upon returning it. But her pen

rested in her hand. It was a simple matter enough to return it, but she could hardly do this without some intimation that she was to leave on the morrow. Why did he not come himself and then she could bid him good-by less formally. Still, the box must go back, and finally she wrote a few lines, thanking him for it, and adding: "If you ever stray so far away as Kingston, pray come to see me and tell me the rest of its story." Then she erased that, and wrote her note over again, saying nothing about going away, but writing "p. p. c." at the bottom of her note. She had some misgivings about this, yet she could not bring herself to a more direct form of leave-taking, and sent the box and note by Maria.

It was in the afternoon when they were sent, and Le Clear was at home. He received them, and seeing the letters at the bottom of the note, he saw plainly that Miss Lovering was soon to leave town. He had few impulses, and seldom acted upon those he had. Yet now he recalled with singular clearness the night of his visit; he remembered well with how beautiful a presence the girl had stood before him; he confessed to himself that that was a moment. He even suffered himself to look back with a certain compassion upon himself that the one notable instant of his life might then and there have slipped by. Out of all this retrospect there grew a delicious sense of having stood upon the brink of love. It was impossible to hide from himself the opportunity which then lay in his hand; equally was it impossible to define with rigor precisely what relations existed between him and the girl. There was an indefiniteness still about them, which held possibilities of exceeding enjoyment. He sat in his chair dallying with the note in his hand, giving himself up to a certain incense-burning to himself, yet every now

and then appealed to, he scarcely knew how, by the image of the girl standing, expectant, waiting, it almost seemed, for him to reach forth his hand. He rose and paced his room. The front windows looked out upon the court, and as he approached them he saw the figure of Sally Lovering as she left her house and made her way across the court. She entered Miss Pix's house. A sudden impulse seized him. He could scarcely let her leave without some show of courtesy on his part, and yet should he disturb the delicately tinted vapors which had been rising about him? He dressed himself quickly and went below, appearing at Miss Lovering's door.

No. Miss Sally Lovering was not at home. He regretted it deeply, penciled his regrets on his card, and left it with Maria.

Yet somehow, as he returned to his room, he found it difficult to recall the airy phantasms which he had permitted to form themselves about him, and presently, leaving his room he went out to spend the evening at the play.

Miss Pix received Sally with open arms.

"I was just wishing for you, my dear," she said. "I have no lessons this afternoon, and I do not want to go out. I believe I have a cold coming on. Sit down, my dear, and tell me what you are going to do. I don't want to flatter you, Sally. I never do flatter people, but seriously, you have grown very mature the last few days. I was saying to Nicholas Judge only yesterday that a great change had come over you."

"Believe nothing of the kind, dear Miss Pix. I have been perplexed about a decision I have had to make, I mean about my plans, and I suppose that has made me venerable."

"You are not going away, surely?"

"Yes, I am. In fact, I came this afternoon to bid you good-by."

"Don't you say it!" cried Miss Pix. "Take it all back. There!" and she brushed away an imaginary cobweb. "I've heard nothing disagreeable, it's all gone away. Let me see, what were we to speak of? The Triennial begins next month. Do you know what is to be given?"

"Yes, I know very well; but you really must listen to me. I am going back to Kingston with my aunt. I mean to take Maria with me also. I don't know how she will bear it, but it may do her good."

"It is too bad, it is too bad," cried Miss Pix. "You don't know what a difference you have made here. I haven't many friends, but I'm no consequence. Just see how every one is leaving."

"First the Manlius family," said Sally, smiling.

"I didn't mind their going, you know. But oh, how I miss Mrs. Blake, and I miss your grandfather, too, Sally. I didn't see him very often, but he was so bright, and so full of his good-natured words. And now you talk just as if you were really going."

"Go I must," said the girl. "I really had come to be at home here. But you will come to see me in Kingston?"

"I don't know," said Miss Pix, shaking her head ruefully. "It's not very easy for me to go away, but I'm sure I shall not want to stay here after you go. The next thing will be that Nicholas and Mrs. Starkey will be going, and then there'll be no one left but Mr. Le Clear, and he's much too fine for me. No, I won't say that. I never did learn to speak evil of my neighbors, except Mr. Manlius, and I'm almost sorry for the way I felt about him; but Mr. Le Clear has so much of an air, that I feel myself diminishing to a vanishing

point when he is about. But, Sally," she whispered, mysteriously, "it will be worse for Nicholas Judge. How he will take it, I don't know. You need n't mind me; but I can see through a ladder," and she pursed up her mouth and looked exceedingly sagacious. The door between the two houses was here rapped upon.

"Talking of the Old Nick," said Miss Pix, jumping up, and hastening to admit her friend. Nicholas came into the room, where Sally was examining the Musical Fund.

"Look at this young lady," cried Miss Pix, "with her trunks packed, and her hat on, coming in this nonchalant way to say good-by to her friends."

"I am not indifferent, Miss Pix," said Sally, turning about, and speaking indignantly. "It is hard enough for me to go, and you ought not to make it harder."

"I envy you, going back to the country," said Nicholas.

"There!" cried Miss Pix. "I knew it. I told you so. You'll go next, I suppose. Have n't I a right to be indignant?"

"I certainly shall go," said Nicholas. Miss Pix sat on her piano stool and dashed away at the keys.

"Miss Pix has an easy way of unloading her mind," said Nicholas to Miss Lovering. "I did not know you were here. I did not know you were going. When do you go?"

"To-morrow."

"Then I am to say good-by, now?"

"I said good-by yesterday," said Sally, in her mind, and she tried to say it with her lips. That would seem to make her answer final. But when she began she took alarm, and her sentence closed with a sudden turn.

"I said good-by — to Miss Pix this afternoon, because I thought she would wish to come this evening to bid my aunt good-by."

"Give my respects to your aunt, please," said Nicholas; "I think she will not expect me to call." He turned away without offering her his hand, and left the room. When Miss Pix turned upon her stool, she found Sally only there, crying.

"You dear child," said she. "I am the most provoking body. I say the rudest things. Do take off your glove, dear, and sit down with me, and we will have a duet. There is nothing that makes two people into one so effectually."

"Is that the reason why you and Mr. Windgraff play together?" said Sally, vexed at having been overtaken by tears. But Miss Pix only squeezed her hand and gave it a tap. She would not answer such nonsense.

Nicholas Judge did not call to say good-by; Miss Pix spent much of the evening with the ladies, and indeed went off once for Mrs. Starkey and brought her for a farewell.

"I had thought Mr. Judge would come," said Mrs. Starkey. "But he was locked in his room, and he does not like to be disturbed."

"I saw him this afternoon and bade him good-by," said Sally. "He sent his respects to you, Aunt Miriam."

"He is a young man whom I think I should respect the more I knew him," said that lady, with decision.

"You 'd love him!" said Miss Pix, energetically. "He 's the kind of young man that you 'd love first and respect afterward. That 's my opinion," and she looked about the company somewhat combatively, and then rubbed her nose with a perplexed air. "I don't think I quite know what that means," she said in an aside to Sally. "At least it sounds a little odd, but what I did n't mean to say was that he was a man to

begin by respecting and ending by loving. I don't think he is. The fact is, I never could analyze character. I 've left all that to Mr. Manlius," and she waved the matter aside with a magisterial sweep of her hand.

Sally took no part in this pæan of the young man, and her silence was the deeper that she was perplexed over the effect of her own words that afternoon. That she should have indirectly intimated a desire to have Nicholas call upon her and her aunt in the evening, to say good-by, was the farthest remove from her intention; nothing but the unfortunate dilemma in which she found herself, when undertaking to retreat before certain perilous words, had occasioned the seeming invitation. Yet why, under the circumstances, he should apparently have at once rejected the overture, almost rudely, was equally puzzling to her. Could it be that he had summarily abandoned what seemed to alarm her as an unrelenting pursuit? It is doubtless of almost equal concern to one thus pursued to know certainly of the arrest of the pursuer, as of one's own security against final capture. It was therefore with a sudden accession of intelligence that she was made aware the next morning of the presence of Nicholas in the railway station, as she sat with her aunt and Maria in the cars waiting for the train to start. The station was a dark and suspicious looking place, and the general aspect of those who hurried through it was of fugitives from justice, an illusion which was not dispelled by the detective air of the gate porter, who scrutinized every one who approached the train. Within the cars it was even more obscure, and hence, when she caught sight of Nicholas from the window where she sat, and presently saw him enter the car which her party occupied, her own eyes could watch him more intelligently than

his, unused to the gloom, could make her out. She saw him come down the aisle, looking upon one side and the other, and even began to speculate as to the chance of his passing them by altogether. As he came opposite to them, however, he stopped, and with a glance at the girl, accosted her aunt, who sat by her side.

"I must send my greetings to Round Top," said he. "I shall never feel altogether a stranger in Kingston so long as that mountain is there to recognize me."

"You will find us there, too," said Miss Lovering. "Not quite so old or so stable as Round Top, but always glad to see you. Once a friend, you need never be a stranger."

"Thank you," said he. "You are kind to call me so. I"— the jerk of the train as the engine was attached, snapped his sentence in two, and he reached out his hand to the younger lady, who sat next the window. As she took his hand, she was aware that he left something within it, and half angry, yet letting the chance go for returning it, she sat without speaking, as he bade her aunt and Maria good-by, and left the train. She turned her head away from her aunt and her face was toward the window. Nicholas, without on the platform, raised his hat. She bowed stiffly, and the train rumbled out of the station.

Miss Sally Lovering sat holding the note which she felt in her hand, and strangely divided in her mind how to treat it. As they rolled out of the city and the country began to show itself, a sense of freedom came to her. The last few days she had seemed to herself to be living under some external weight which she in vain endeavored to lift from herself. Her heart grew lighter as she escaped from scenes and persons who in some way were hemming her in. She felt, nevertheless,

that she was not altogether free; that she had failed to speak the decisive word which would have sundered forever the imaginary tie which held her to the young man who had so willfully suppressed her freedom of speech; that there remained something for her still to do. A shawl lay in her lap. She adjusted it over her hands and taking the note which she still held, she tore it slowly into diminutive bits.

CHAPTER XIX.

At the station in Kingston the familiar depot carriage was standing, and Silas King greeted the travelers familiarly. He looked a little curiously at Maria, and seemed to hesitate whether she was to go into the carryall or on the trunk strapped behind, but when he had folded the steps with a clatter and clambered to his seat and gathered up his reins, he clucked to his horse and, fairly started on the road, turned about in his seat with —

"Heard the news, Miss Lovering?"

"What news, Silas?"

"Great news for Kingston. Huddup, there."

"Well, what is the news?"

"There 's been a capitalist here since you went down last week; 's been a looking round for a site for a great hotel."

"Did he look at your lot?"

"Yes, he *did*. Get up, there."

"Well, is he going to buy it?"

"Yes, he *is*."

"Why, that 's good news for you, Silas."

"You see, Miss Lovering, I came down to the depot and I see a man get out of the train an' look round, and I says to myself, as soon 's I set eyes on him, — 'that 's a capitalist,' and when he got into the carryall and we started up the hill, he began to ask me questions, and I knew right off what he was after, an' I

drove him right up to my lot there on the side of Round Top. I did n't say anything, but I just hauled up my horse, and p'inted with this whip off toward the east, and he said, says he, 'I never see such a view as that.' He stayed up there a good while, poking round, and he looked at old Judge's cabin, and I guess he 's pretty much fixed. I tho't mebbe he 'd be up again in the train this morning. It 'll be a great thing for Kingston when he gets that hotel of his fixed up."

Silas was nearer right this time than he had been before upon the many occasions when he had built large hopes upon imaginary foundations. The side of Round Top did indeed command a superb view, and the two adjoining lots of Silas King's and the Judges' afforded an admirable place for a country resort. Silas King's house was in a sad state of unrepair, and the deserted house of the Judges was beginning to show signs of negligence. Still, the situation of the latter was a desirable one, and the capitalist had determined upon buying the two places, and enlarging the house formerly occupied by Mr. Judge, sufficiently to answer the immediate demands of summer boarders. He had made inquiries as to the ownership, but no one could tell him whereabout the young man who succeeded to his father's property had gone. Young Judge had quietly gone away, and the only news of him which any one had was that several weeks before a large man had come up from the city to try to induce some of the farmer's daughters to go back with him and be servants, and he knew about Judge.

"I could n't remember his name," said Silas, "he left a card with me, and one down 't the hotel, but I did n't keep mine, and Johnson, he could n't find his, but I happened to think of Mr. Lovering and took him there. Mr. Lovering, he could n't think of his

name, but he knew what his business was, and Mr. Le Clear he said he guessed he could find out from that."

"Mr. Le Clear!" said Miss Lovering; "that could n't have been your neighbor, Sally? Was he a young man, Silas?"

"Well, no; sh'd say he was 'bout fifty or thereabout."

"Probably some relation, then."

"A relation of yours, Miss Lovering?" said Silas. "Don't say so!"

"No, not of mine, but of an acquaintance of mine."

"Why, now that 's first-rate. He 'll bring all his friends up here to the new hotel." Sally heard the conversation with a singular complexity of feeling. The sudden disclosure of a possibility of Paul Le Clear being brought again into association with her seemed to cause a secret door to spring open within her. She shrank back as if she had been suddenly confronted with the young man in her aunt's presence, and was for a moment too confused to reply to the question put to her. There was brought before her also a vivid contrast of the city and the country. She recalled her conversation with him, and he seemed for the moment to stand as a sort of representative of the pictures and books and music which she had been enjoying. The quiet of the country, and even the companionship of her aunts, seemed for the time to offer an insipid and cheerless exchange. Le Clear was also mysteriously associated in her mind with her grandfather's death. She shuddered each time that she recalled the contrast which had been discovered, when she went lightly upstairs after her adieu, with her face flushed and her eyes glowing, to be precipitated into the presence of her dead grandfather.

Yet even as she thought of this, her mind slipped

along to the after scenes, and she could not avoid making place in her thought for the strong and reverent young man who lifted her grandfather so tenderly, and seemed always in waiting that night for whatever service might be appointed him. She turned away from him now in her mind, and looked for the familiar sights in her Kingston home.

The life which this young girl had led in the city for the past few weeks can hardly be said to have been one of great gayety. She had been housed with an eremite scholar who counted all time in danger of eternal loss, not spent among his books. She had had her piano and books, but these with little difference she had enjoyed in the country. She had made a few acquaintances and had visited picture stores and attended concerts. Yet the few weeks had certainly wrought a difference in her, and when her Aunt Rebecca received her at the old house, she looked with both pride and misgiving upon her.

"Sally is not the same as when she left, Miriam," she said. "She has grown more mature. I suppose it is her grandfather's death that has sobered her, but I own I am a little afraid of her."

"Nonsense, Rebecca," said her sister, decisively, unwilling to admit any change. "Sally is a little girl, still, and her city life has only made her head a little fuller than it was before." Yet she herself suspected that there were some things in that head which first found a place there in her absence.

After the first excitement of the return was over, Sally resumed her wonted occupations, and filled her place in the quiet circle as simply and good-naturedly as ever. The only difference which her aunts could finally perceive was in a certain reserve and reticence regarding her city experience which seemed not wholly

in keeping with the frankness of her frequent letters, before Miss Lovering had visited her. The two elder ladies, sitting alone with her, and looking with admiration upon her departure and return as, in some sort, a bit of romance let into their plain lives, worked assiduously at their knitting, or sewing, or embroidery, and asked discreet questions, which should draw out the young adventuress, and yet not seem to imply too eager or prying a curiosity.

"It was very singular, Miriam, was it not," said Miss Rebecca Lovering, "that that Judge boy should turn up so unexpectedly as a neighbor of Sally's. She never saw anything of him here. You never knew young Judge to speak to him here, did you, Sally? though I suppose you saw him in church."

"No; I never knew him here at all."

"There were some curious stories about him, or rather about his father. I used to think Mr. Arnold was a confidant of his, Miriam."

"Very possibly, Rebecca; but Mr. Arnold always kept his own counsels. He was the most discreet man I ever knew."

"Did he ever talk about himself, aunt?" asked Sally, very willing that the talk should drift away from Nicholas.

"No, child. I respected Mr. Arnold too much to ask him; and he respected himself too much to talk about himself."

"Still, I should like to have known something more about him; and as he had no relations here, I don't see that we are likely ever to know anything more."

"If he had been in love," said Miss Miriam, "he would have told everything, I suppose. That is the way with people in love. I have heard of it repeatedly,

but never could understand why it was so. I suppose it is natural." For some reason, the conversation which took place thus between the three ladies always eddied about subjects which Sally wished to avoid, and her reticence, therefore, increased to a degree which rendered her even more unhappy than it rendered her aunts.

"Why is it," she cried to herself, "that I cannot talk simply and naturally about all these things? If I only could, I am sure all these illusions would disappear." As the spring advanced and the clear weather rendered the walking good, she escaped more and more from the house and her aunts into the freedom of nature. Yet still she was not herself half so exhilarated by the air and liberty as it seemed right she should be. One day her stroll carried her, as frequently, to the summit of Round Top. The wide spread view seemed to enlarge in her vision. She looked off toward the city and saw, what was a rare and much talked of sight, the gleaming of the sun on the waters of the bay before the city, forty miles distant. She looked long and eagerly, as if by tension of sight she might even descry objects less expansive than the salt water. She recalled the opportunity once given her to see Round Top from that distant point, and tried to imagine herself in the city, eager to escape into the country. She took an unusual path down the mountain, and it brought her into the cleared ground where the adjoining King and Judge farms were placed. As she passed the former she saw Silas taking his horse out of the carryall and driving him with some vehemence into his shed. She remembered the conversation which her aunt had had with Silas, the day when they came up from the station, and as her path led her past the man, who recognized her, it suddenly occurred to her to ask him if his

capitalist had made his arrangements yet for building his hotel.

"That Mr. Le Clear? no, he hain't. Get into the barn, you old quadruped. That horse is infernal slow, Miss Lovering. I'm sort of stirred up to-day, but don't you mind. And what's more, he ain't agoing to. That mis'ble fellow that owns the house over yonder won't sell. Mr. Le Clear he hunted him up and found him in some queer court, they say, and wanted to buy the place, and offered him a fust-rate sum of money, cash *down*, but he would n't sell it, and he would n't give any reasons. Blam'd if I would n't sell, reason or no reason. And then, Mr. Le Clear, he won't buy my place 'thout he buys his'n; says he don't want to have to build, and besides, Judge's place just cuts his view off. He'd a liked mine, to go along side of t' other. I'm blam'd if *I* want to see that young man again, and there he come to-day, as quiet as you please, and would n't ride, not he; he'd walk up, and off he started. I've a great mind to sell out at auction and go off West or somewhere;" and thereupon Silas disappeared in the shed.

The intelligence that Nicholas Judge had come that day to Kingston was sufficient to make Sally wish she had taken some other path than that which led past his house, but she kept on her way, disturbed in her mind, and wondering if the young man intended a permanent return, and meant to reoccupy his old house. She passed the lonely house without meeting any one, but as she turned by a bend in the road, she saw, coming up the hill, his head bent down, a figure which she recognized at once as that of Nicholas. She was not seen, and stepping one side, she looked about to see if there was not some covert which would afford a temporary screen. A stone wall ran by the side of the

road, overrun by vines and accompanied by bushes which grew in a straggling way along its course. There was an inviting broad stone, easily reached. She climbed quickly upon it, one or two loose stones falling in the passage into the grass at the foot, passed to the other side, and stepped behind some bushes which screened her from the observation of any one passing that way. As she stood there, her heart beating with a sense of her own folly and timidity, she heard the young man treading the road, and then, as if by a sudden resolve he stopped, turned aside, and sat upon the stone wall, looking off across the field and over to the country beyond. She was hidden still from his view, but she could see him through the bushes. There was little time for consideration. A step or two on his part would reveal her to him and she would appear in a most unfortunate light. On the other hand, if she were to begin to descend the hill, he would certainly hear her, and stepping into the field would discover her in full retreat. There was no course left but to retrace her steps and retrieve her false movement by such boldness as remained to her. She turned about and two or three steps brought her before him, as he sat with his hands clasped about his knees looking over the field. He jumped down quickly from his perch. She held a few flowers in her hand, the stray gatherings of her walk, and with her gipsy hat, and simple dress, she would have struck a chance observer as singularly picturesque — precisely such a figure as one, enjoying a landscape, might be glad to see emerge from the bushes, and add the light and life which redeem nature from a too monotonous and distant charm. Sally tried to brave the occasion by a somewhat forced gayety.

"I knew your face," she said. "It is quite as easily

recognized by me, as my back once was by you, but our positions are reversed."

"Take my place, then, on the wall," said he, "that we may get into the right relation with each other." He spoke brightly, also, with a flush which the surprise of meeting her had bought to his face, and which deepened as she spoke to him. He gave her his hand, and she, hesitating a moment, sat down, with a sense of paying the penalty for her impulsive indiscretion, upon the broad stone which he had relinquished. It certainly was a lovely view which extended before her. She had not seen it before in her hurry to cross the wall and find a refuge, and now it afforded a grateful rest for her eyes, which were rather truant in their disposition. She was the first to speak; there was a certain constraint in the situation which made her restless under silence.

"So you had no ambition to see your house turned into a summer resort; or perhaps you have come back to take advantage of the suggestion, and improve the place yourself. Certainly, it would not be easy to find so noble a view."

"Then you heard that the place was sought for that purpose?"

"It was so important a piece of news that we had not been five minutes in Kingston before we were told of it."

"I am sorry Silas was disappointed."

"And all the city people famishing for a breath of country air?"

"It is rather difficult for me to turn my sympathy into quite so broad a channel. I prefer to retain the place, even at the risk of being selfish, to devoting it to a parcel of languid people who will patronize nature and regard Round Top as a bore. Besides, if I

had no other reason, I have a sufficient one in my father's wish, that I should never part with the place, but rather let it go to decay than sell it."

"Was he so much attached to it?"

"Yes; though I doubt if that was what led him to express his wish so strongly. I think he had more than one reason, but at least, one was in a fear that I might require some strong influence to keep me to a country life. There were certain associations which my father had, moreover with Kingston, which made him very desirous that I should continue to live here. My father, as you may know, was an Englishman."

"No, I did not know it."

"He was a brother of Mr. Arnold."

"A brother of Mr. Arnold!"

"Yes, you have undoubtedly heard your aunt speak of Mr. Arnold."

"Many a time. But"—

"But what?"

"Are you not telling me what I ought not to know? I have often asked my aunt about Mr. Arnold, but she would tell me nothing about him."

"It is possible she did not know this fact," said Nicholas, with a faint smile.

"But your aunt was Mrs. Blake," pursued Sally, who was both interested and confused by the attempt to adjust new and old facts.

"True. She was my mother's sister. My mother was an American."

"How is it, then?"—

"Well?"

"I am afraid you will think me inquisitive, but your father's name was not Arnold?"

"Mr. Arnold's name was not Arnold. His name also was Judge. It was Nicholas Arnold Judge, but

he dropped the last name when he came here to live. May I tell you, in a few words, about him, about my father, and about myself?" Sally's assent of silence was in fact a recollection of her aunt's dictum that no one but a man in love talked about himself.

"My father and my Uncle Nicholas were brothers living in Kingston, England. They both fell ardently in love with my mother, who was an American girl, traveling in England, and staying at that time with a friend in Kingston, whose acquaintance she had made on the Continent. She was exceedingly beautiful, and as American girls were unusual visitors at Kingston, she received a great deal of attention in the town. My uncle was in the army, and at home then on a furlough; my father was younger, and a student at Cambridge. It was the long vacation, and he also was at home. The two brothers engaged in a lively rivalry, but neither at first was thoroughly in earnest. Yet as the summer went by, it became evident to each that they were alike ardently attached to my mother, and that whichever of them was successful, the suffering of the other would be terrible. At length my father became so morbid that one night, without warning, and without any explanation, he disappeared. He came to this country with the resolution to leave the field to his brother; he had made up his mind, from some caprice, that my mother did not love him, and rather than stay to witness his brother's success, with a feeling also that by going away he would put an end to the complication which existed, he fled precipitately, and came, as I said, to this country. His departure was so sudden that the village was thrown into alarm, and the mystery seemed insoluble. One person however, did understand it, or thought she did. The scene which had convinced my father in his excitement that he was not loved, was in

reality an evidence of the love which he did receive, and which he had so willfully shut himself out from. My uncle, in his distress, sought everywhere for my father but in vain. He saw with all the clearness of noonday that he himself could never have won her whom he loved, and could not now. He went to her and made this confession, strange as it may seem, and received from her a frank admission that she did love my father. Then he redoubled his efforts. Miss Brown meanwhile — that was my mother's name — returned to this country, and kept up her intercourse with my uncle. He himself left Kingston, directly after she had gone, sold out his commission, and began a search for my father. More than once he seemed to come near him, but to be evaded. This led him to change his name, and by this means to make his approach easier. At length he succeeded in getting into my father's hands a letter from Miss Brown, which so far opened my father's eyes as to lead him to seek an interview with her. He was sadly changed by the experience through which he had passed, but she, besides her old love, which had never faded, had the additional sense of desiring to repair a wrong which she had unwittingly inflicted. My father had grown moody and irresolute, but in his marriage he had the beginning of a return to brighter life. My uncle, restless and proud, would not go back to England, but plunged into travel, for a relief. He wandered everywhere, coming back at last to find my mother dead, and my father left with me, buried here as a hermit. There was little left to the two brothers but each other, and my uncle, respecting the confirmed habits of my father, never openly recognized the relationship. He spent the last few years of his life here, and died when I was a boy. But my father, even after my uncle's death, would never reveal

the fact that it was his brother that died. He even abstained from going to his funeral. He left all this to me to learn from a paper inclosed with his will. Do you wonder that I should have been oppressed by all the mystery of my father's life, and should have been an object of suspicion here in the village, I, who lived under the shadow of all this strange life, never knew then what it was to have a warm, perfectly open friend? My uncle I never knew as such, and he was quite the only one who drew me to himself. It was your aunt's likeness to my mother that made him seek her and find his rest in her presence. But I was not a churlish or secretive fellow, trust me, and in my eagerness to escape from the close air in which I had been living, I went to the city in search of my mother's sister." There was silence after Nicholas had told his story. Sally was looking down, and he stood with his arms folded, apparently waiting for her to speak. But she did not speak. Then he resumed: —

"My father had for years been engaged in experiments in the chemistry of plants. He had taught me eagerly what he had learned, and had inspired me with some of his enthusiasm. I spent the winter pursuing his investigations, feeling a certain filial duty to be upon me to perfect them, before I could regard myself as faithful to him. I have just completed my work and reached results which satisfy me of an assured success. You can understand why, when I went away from this place, suspected, and under the cloud which I lived in with my father, I should wish to cut off wholly my connection with the place, unwilling to return till it could be as in some sense a vindicator of my father's memory. He did not live here in vain. He was a profound student. All the strength of his nature was poured into his studies, and when my mother died, he

suffered nothing else to take his thought or attention. He educated me to be the heir to his studies, but I sometimes think" — here he smiled — "that the mother in me was active also. As I wrote you in my note, I would not come back here, no, not even because you were here, until I could fulfill my pledge to my father's memory. I have no fear of returning here now on his account. I have redeemed the pledge to him. I came to redeem mine to you. When I said in my note, that I would not come to you until I could bring you the perfected fruit of my love, I did not know what the sacrifice meant. I have lived without you these weeks. I have given myself to my father's work, but when I come to you now, I am strangely poor. I have told you of my father, of my uncle, of myself. See how lonely I am. I have done what was given me to do. All whom I clung to are dead. I have great hopes, great plans; great things open before me, and they all turn on the word which one woman speaks. Do you think I am brave to stand here and say that? It is the courage of despair. When I spoke to you before out of the depths of a troubled heart, I was struggling with my destiny. I could not, I would not let it then be determined. Now I come to you again. If you send me away, I shall go, and I suppose I shall take up my work and carry it on. But do you know the difference between the work of love and the work of loneliness? Why do I go on thus, asking questions, and never giving you time to answer them? Why do I arrest your gesture? I want to empty all my heart to you and then bid you enter and see how ready it is for you. This is a fair view before us. Look!" He placed himself by her side, and pointed to the wide horizon. "How far we can see! how far!" He bent his head, as one to re-

ceive a stroke, and in a low, firm tone repeated the words he had said before: —

"I love you. Shall I go?"

She did not answer. He rose, but the lightest possible touch was laid upon him.

CHAPTER XX.

THE dwellers in Five-Sisters Court had one by one disappeared from the precincts, and a melancholy display of placards in the windows, or closely-blinded fronts, signified the desertion of the houses by the occupants. Yet the corner house occupied by Miss Pix was not yet deserted, for lights were in the windows, and the coming now and then of a visitor indicated some sort of mirth in the one occupied house. Miss Pix herself, most ubiquitous of hostesses, was flitting back and forth between the parlor and the front door, skirmishing in a lively fashion before her pronounced attack upon each new-comer. There were not many of these. Mrs. Starkey, who, by special arrangement still had her quarters in the next house, but made one at Miss Pix's table, was seated quietly in the corner, rarely speaking, and shrinking away whenever she found it possible to escape Miss Pix's hospitable eye, bent upon her equal enjoyment. The other guests were Miss Pix's four musical friends, Mr. Windgraff, Mr. Pfeiffer, Mr. Pfeffendorf, and Mr. Schmauker, with wives and daughters wherever they were generously provided with the same.

"You always have a surprise for us, Miss Pix," said Mr. Schmauker, good-naturedly. "What is it to-night?"

"Wait and see," said she, mysteriously. The musical instruments were in request, and the company were soon lively over music and talk.

"The Musical Fund must be donated," said Mr. Pfeiffer gravely, and he deposited a copper in the hands of the rapacious musical box. The rest felt for their purses, and a general contribution was taken up.

"It is like a church," said Mr. Pfeffendorf, who rarely spoke except to his bosom friend Mr. Schmauker. "We pay our contributions, — it is free offering, — and then we enjoy Miss Pix."

Here that lady tapped upon the piano with a roll of music.

"Listen," she said. "I heard some good news today, so I have called you all together to enjoy it with me. We will first put ourselves in proper mood by playing Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March,' and as we have not the music arranged except for four hands at the piano, Mr. Windgraff and I will play it."

"That is the overture," she proceeded; "now for my good news. Our Mr. Nicholas Judge and our Miss Sally Lovering are to be married."

"To each other?" asked Mr. Pfeiffer.

"Surely," said Mr. Windgraff, "you would not have them marry some one else."

"Not if they were in love," said the careful Mr. Pfeiffer. "Mrs. Pfeiffer and I married each other. It was because we were in love, my dear."

There was great chattering over the news, and much recollection of the Christmas eve which had introduced Nicholas to the society of the court. A very animated discussion went on among the musical gentlemen as to the exact facts respecting the arrival of Nicholas, and such few matters as were known respecting the young lady were eagerly canvassed. Something had transpired respecting their both being in the same town, and there was opportunity for great diversity of opinion regarding their previous acquaintance, Mr. Schmauker

maintaining that their respective parents had once been ardently attached to each other, and Mr. Pfeffendorf arguing that Nicholas's aunt and Dr. Chocker had had some understanding in the matter mysteriously connected with their simultaneous death, while Mr. Pfeiffer stoutly asserted that the attachment had sprung up in very tender years, and had been going on secretly, a theory which commended itself especially to him and Mrs. Pfeiffer.

Mrs. Starkey, who had already been made acquainted with the news, received the congratulations of all, as being in a measure an aunt by brevet to Nicholas, and in her quiet corner was not altogether unhappy, though very undemonstrative.

But the evening slipped away, and one by one the guests left. Mrs. Starkey went into her solitary house to think of the two young people who were to begin the life which she was ready to lay aside; the Pfeiffers went home, Mr. Pfeiffer giving his wife a good-natured hug of the fat arm which rested heavily on his; and Mr. Schmauker and Mr. Pfeffendorf indulging in some private gossip respecting a certain friend of theirs.

Mr. Windgraff alone remained, thrumming his violin.

"It is like Haydn's Departure Symphony," said Miss Pix, coming back and looking a trifle sober. "Think of our party here at Christmas; and then see, each one has in turn laid his instrument down and gone away. The Ignoble Romans went first," — it was by this name that their unmentioned neighbors went, — "then Dr. Chocker" —

"Laid aside his ear-trumpet," interposed Mr. Windgraff.

"Hermann Windgraff!" said Miss Pix, trying to look shocked. "Then good Mrs. Blake; then Miss Sally."

"But she was not at the party."

"She was here potentially. I don't suppose you know what that means, but I found the word and have been saving it. Then Mr. Le Clear went to Europe; his rich uncle, you know, sent him — the one that came here to find out about Nicholas. Then Nicholas went away."

"And here are we two wagging our heads at each other," said Mr. Windgraff. "You know in Haydn's symphony, that when two are left one gets up and goes, and the other remains playing on until he suddenly discovers that there is no one else present. Now there are two of us left; I do not like to go." Mr. Windgraff spoke simply, but without hesitation. He waited a moment. "That is not plain enough," he resumed. "I would like to marry you, dear Miss Betsey Pix, for I do love you heartily."

"Marry me! why I never thought of such a thing. Oh, yes I have too," said the conscience-stricken little woman. "But I did n't think you would ever ask me," and she burst into tears. "But I am so glad, for I know you always would have been my friend, but now you will be a great deal more. Have you really been loving me? Why I have loved you, too. I don't suppose I ought to have said so much."

"We will say a great deal more," said Mr. Windgraff, and much more they did say, not that night only but long after.

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